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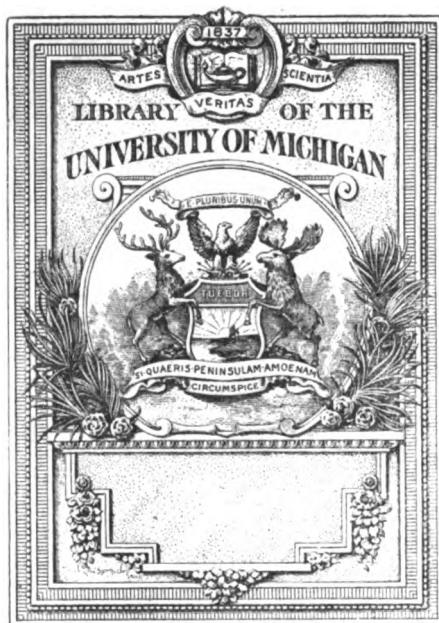
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**THE VARIORUM AND DEFINITIVE EDITION
OF THE POETICAL AND PROSE WRITINGS OF
EDWARD FITZGERALD**

THE VARIORUM AND DEFINITIVE EDITION
OF THE POETICAL AND PROSE WRITINGS OF

EDWARD FITZGERALD

INCLUDING A COMPLETE BIBLIOGRAPHY AND
INTERESTING PERSONAL AND LITERARY NOTES
THE WHOLE COLLECTED AND ARRANGED BY

GEORGE BENTHAM

AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

EDMUND GOSSE



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**EXTRACTS FROM FITZGERALD'S LET-
TERS RELATING TO "THE DOWNFALL
AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS."**

To W. B. Donne.

Market Hill, Woodbridge, October 4, '63.

Sophocles has almost shaken my Allegiance to Æschylus. Oh, those two Œdipuses! but then that Agamemnon! Well: one shall be the Handel and t'other the Haydn; one the Michel Angelo, and t'other the Raffaele of Tragedy.

To C. E. Norton.

Lowestoft, Sept. 3, '79.

. . . As to my thinking you could be ' importunate ' in asking again for my two Sophocles Abstracts, you must know that such importunity cannot but be grateful. I am only rather ashamed that you should have to repeat it. I laid the Plays by after looking them over some months ago, meaning to wait till another year to clear up some parts, if not all. Thus do my little works arrive at such form as they result in, good or bad; so as, however I may be blamed for the liberties I take with the Great, I cannot be accused of over haste in doing so, though blamed I may be for rashness in meddling with them at all. Anyhow, I would not send you any but a fair MS.

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EXTRACTS FROM FITZGERALD'S LETTERS.

if I sent MS. at all; and may perhaps print it in a small way, not to publish, but so as to ensure a final Revision, such as will also be more fitting for you to read. It is positively the last of my Works! having been by me these dozen years, I believe, occasionally looked at. So much for that. . . .

To C. E. Norton.

Feb. 22, '80.

. . . I cannot yet get the 2nd. Part (Coloneus) to fit as I wish to the first: finding (what I never doubted) that nothing is less true than Goethe's saying that these two Plays and Antigone must be read in Sequence as a Trilogy. . . .

To C. E. Norton.

Woodbridge, March 4, 1880.

Herewith you will receive, I suppose, Part I. of Œdipus, which I found on my return here after a week's absence. I really hope you will like it, after taking the trouble more than once to ask for it: only (according to my laudable rule of Give or Take in such cases) say no more of it to me than to point out anything amendable: for which, you see, I leave a wide margin, for my own behoof as well as my reader's. And again I will say that I wish you would keep it wholly to yourself: and, above all, not let a word about it cross the Atlantic. I will not send a Copy even to Professor Goodwin, to whom you can show yours, if he should happen to mention the subject;

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“THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.”

nor will I send one to Mrs. Kemble, the only other whom I had thought of. In short, you, my dear Sir, are the only Depositary of this precious Document, which I would have you keep as though it were very precious indeed.

You will see at once that it is not even a Paraphrase, but an Adaptation of the Original: not as more adapted to an Athenian Audience 400 years B.C. but to a merely English Reader 1800 years A.D. Some dropt stitches in the Story, not considered by the old Genius of those days, I have, I think, ‘taken up,’ as any little Dramatist of these Days can do: though the fundamental absurdity of the Plot (equal to Tom Jones according to Coleridge!) remains; namely, that Œdipus, after so many years reigning in Thebes as to have a Family about him, should apparently never have heard of Laius’ murder till the Play begins. One acceptable thing I have done, I think, omitting very much rhetorical fuss about the poor man’s Fatality, which I leave for the Action itself to discover; as also a good deal of that rhetorical Scolding, which, I think, becomes tiresome even in its Greek: as the Scene between Œdipus and Creon after Tiresias: and equally unreasonable. The Choruses, which I believe are thought fine by Scholars, I have left to old Potter to supply, as I was hopeless of making anything of them; pasting, you see, his ‘Finale’ over that which I had tried.

I believe that I must leave Part II. for the present, being rather wearied with the present stupendous effort, at Ætat. 71. If I live another year, and am still free

EXTRACTS FROM FITZGERALD'S LETTERS.

from the ill incident to my Time, I will make an end of it, and of all my Doings in that way.

To Fanny Kemble.

[Feb., 1881.]

. . . *as to Publication in this case; no such Design is in my head: on the contrary, not even a Friend will know of it except yourself, Mr. Norton, and Aldis Wright: the latter of whom would not be of the party but that he happened to be here when I was too purblind to correct the few Proofs, and very kindly did so for me. As for Mr. Norton (America), he it was for whom it was printed at all—at his wish, he knowing the MS. had been lying by me unfinisht for years. It is a Version of the two Œdipus Plays of Sophocles united as two Parts of one Drama. . . .*

To Fanny Kemble.

[Feb., 1881.]

.
And with this Letter comes my Sophocles, of which I have told you what I expect you will think also, and therefore need not say—unless of a different opinion. . . . Such corrections as you will find are not meant as Poetical—or rather Versifying—improvements, but either to clear up obscurity, or to provide for some modifications of the two Plays when made, as it were, into one. Especially concerning the Age of Œdipus; whom I do not intend to be the old man in Part II. as he appears in the original. . . .

“THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.”

As I said of my own Æschylus Choruses, I say of old Potter's now: better just take a hint from them of what they are about—or imagine it for yourself—and then imagine, or remember, some grand Organ piece—as of Bach's Preludes—which will be far better Interlude than Potter—or I—or even (as I dare think) than Sophocles' self!

To C. E. Norton.

Woodbridge, March 13 [1881].

I send you along with this Letter Part II. of Œdipus, with some corrections or suggestions which I have been obliged to make in Pencil, because of the Paper blotting under the lightest Penwork. And along with it a preliminary Letter, which I believe I told you of also, addressed to your Initial: for I did not wish to compromise you even with yourself in such a Business. I know you will like it probably more than it deserves, and excuse its inroads on the Original, though you may, and probably will, think I might better have left it alone, or followed it more faithfully. . . .

To C. E. Norton.

Woodbridge, Jan. 18, '82.

At last I took heart, and Eyes, to return to the Œdipus of this time last year; and have left none of your objections unattended to, if not all complied with. Not but that you may be quite as right in objecting as I in leaving things as they were: but as I believe I said (right

EXTRACTS FROM FITZGERALD'S LETTERS.

or wrong) a little obscurity seems to me not amiss in certain places, provided enough is left clear, I mean in matter of Grammar, &c.

To C. E. Norton.

Woodbridge, Jan. 25, 1882.

I herewith enclose you a sort of Choral Epilogue for the second Part, which you can stick in or not as you will. I cannot say much for it: but it came together in my head after last writing to you, while I was pacing up and down a Landing-place in my house, to which I have been confined for the last ten days by a Bronchial Cold. . . .

**THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF
KING ŒDIPUS.**

PREFATORY LETTER.

MY DEAR N—

Some while ago you asked me to complete a version of the *Œdipus Tyrannus Colonæus* of Sophocles, which had been lying by me some years. Here they are at last, the two Tragedies united into one Drama under the ponderous alliteration which figures on the Title-page; for which, however, I could hit on no so comprehensive a substitute. If you can, pray do so. There also, you see that my Drama professes to be neither a Translation, nor a Paraphrase of Sophocles, but “chiefly taken” from him: I need scarcely add, only intended for those who do not read the Greek. As you, however, to whom I send it, are a Scholar, who not only knows, but reveres the original, I shall try to excuse some of the liberties which I have taken with it. For my very free treatment of what I have retained you are already sufficiently prepared; not so, perhaps, for the much I have omitted: still less for one audacious substitution of my own work for that of Sophocles in what I may call the Second Act in the Second Part of my Play.

Well, then, to begin with the more venial sins of omission. You will see that I have dispensed with all (including what I believe is called the *Kommos*) which follows the narration of the catastrophe as related by the | several (π) witnesses; as I think is the case in some of the Tragedies of Euripides. What Professor Paley says of the Kom-

PREFATORY LETTER.

mos which terminates the *Persæ* of Æschylus must, I think, be true of all: that, whatever effect the vehement recitation might add to it, the Dialogue is secondary to the Spectacle—by which I understand him to mean those outward signs of woe which are implied in the name. Even as I venture to believe—proh Scholasticus!—that in most of the Lyric Chorus (unless in the case of Æschylus) the words are secondary to the Lyre: are, in fact, a kind of better *Libretto* for the music.

However this may be with Ode or Kommos, I think no English reader will care to have the horror of the catastrophe in the first Play increased, even to his Mind's eye, by the exhibition of the poor self-blinded King staggering into the public street, whither his two daughters have been summoned to weep, and be wept over by him. In the original, you know, the spectacle he presents is much more revolting—a spectacle indeed of royal degradation surely worse than any which Aristophanes satirised in Euripides. And is not the catastrophe when told of as being accomplished within doors, more terrible, though less horrible, than when exhibited without? And, on the other hand, does not a reader find the impression left on him by the grand catastrophe of the Colonæus dissipated rather than enhanced by the Lamentations which follow, and conclude the Tragedy?

Thus far I do not think you will much differ with me: but what will you say to the disappearance of two principal Characters from the *Dramatis Personæ*—that of Creon from the first Play, and that of Ismene from the

PREFATORY LETTER.

second? Œdipus, you know, has involved Creon in the same groundless charge of Treason which he brings against | Teiresias; and, after much and violent alterca- (III)
tion with the Prophet, turns with yet more vindictive fury upon the Prince, who comes to vindicate himself from the charge. From all which little results except to show that the Creon of this Play (the Tyrannus) proves himself by his temperate self-defence, and subsequent forbearance toward his accuser, very unlike the Creon of the two after Tragedies, which Goethe thought should be regarded as parts of a connected Trilogy—a theory which is not favoured either by this dissimilarity of character in the several Tragedies, nor by the dates usually assigned to the composition of each; the Antigone being reputed as among the earlier, and the Colonnæus, as tradition tells, the very last of all the Poet's works.

As for Ismene—her cautious refusal to help in burying her revolted brother may not be inconsistent with her singular exploit of riding alone to Athens to acquaint her banished father with what is plotting against him in Thebes. But her arrival brings with it more of paternal and filial effusion than comes within the compass of my Play. So I pretend that some loyal Theban—she, if you please, on her Sicilian filly—had told all that was to be told previously to the opening of the Play: and thus Ismene “disappears from my Playbill” altogether. And Œdipus seems to me to present us a no less pathetic figure when accompanied only by the one daughter who

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is traditionally associated with him as the type of filial, as afterward of sisterly devotion.

The disappearance of the two sisters along with that Kommos from the first Play helps to connect it with the second in point of Time, without, I think, diminishing the interest of either. In the Tyrannus, you know, Œdipus appears as a man little, if at all, beyond the prime of life. (iv) | He came quite young, he tells us, to Thebes; his unlucky marriage, by which the State thought to confirm his other claims to the throne, would, for the same reasons, be not long delayed; those two daughters of his are scarce in their teens—certainly not marriageable—when brought in to him just before his expulsion; which, as the life of Thebes depended on it, must have followed immediately on his conviction. Creon, at any rate, must have been, by his ill-starr'd relation with Œdipus, considerably the older of the two; and he, we see, is capable of very active service both in the Colonæus and Antigone; and certainly if Œdipus became an old man between the time of his leaving Thebes, and that of his arrival at Athens, Antigone, who figures along with him in both the original Tragedies, may, on her subsequent return to Thebes, have been a suitable bride in point of years to Creon's son Hæmon, but scarcely such as he would have been so much enamoured of as to sacrifice himself at her side.

Nevertheless, in the original Colonæus, Œdipus has become an old—I think, a very old man. Our own Theatre—our own Shakespeare—has “jumped the life”

PREFATORY LETTER.

of his people over as wide an interval in the compass of a single Play as Sophocles has done in two several Tragedies; but, especially if considering them as parts of a Trilogy, one cannot help asking one's self *where*, in all the little world of Greece, Œdipus could have found Space to wander in all the Time.

Perhaps, however, so ran the legend; or Sophocles consider'd that, as usual, I think, in ancient Tragedy—the “Pity of it” was increased by adding the weight of old age to blindness and calamity. I do not question that: but is it so with the grandeur of his præternatural “taking off,” if determined to a time of life when death in some way or other is inevitable?

So much for omission. And now for my capital act (v) of treason committed against Sophocles, amounting to nothing less than the re-casting of the whole Second Act (as I call it) of the Colonnæus, including Creon's bootless expedition to Athens.

I never understood, though I doubt not the Athenian audience approved, that coming of his with a considerable force (as in the original he does) unprevented—uninterrupted, and apparently unobserved, under the very walls of their City, and seizing on those who were taking refuge there. Insomuch that, when King Theseus, alarmed by the outcries of the Chorus, comes to the rescue, Antigone and Ismene have already been forced away by some of Creon's people, and Œdipus only just escapes being carried off by Creon himself.

In re-casting all this, I hope that whatever wrong I

PREFATORY LETTER.

may have done Sophocles, King Theseus, at any rate, has not suffered indignity at my hands, if Creon be made to regard him of sufficient account as to apprise him before advancing to his walls; *not* with the rash design of seizing and carrying off those who are under his protection; but to prevail on them, if he can, by fair argument, to return to Thebes: Theseus standing between the two parties to hear, if not to judge, what has to be said on either side.

And on that score also I have something to say. Up to this visit of Creon's, I could never see any just ground for the rancorous hate which Œdipus entertains and exhibits toward Creon or toward his own sons, which occupies so much of the Colonæus with imprecations, that remind one of Lear's against his daughter, but without as much reason, and therefore without engaging our sympathy in his behalf. For how stands the case?
(vi) Phœbus | had announced that, until the murder of King Laius were avenged, Thebes would not rid herself of the Plague that was devouring her: Œdipus denounces Excommunication on the Criminal; convicts himself;¹ and, after putting out his own eyes, calls aloud for Thebes to execute the sentence he had call'd down upon himself, whether by banishment or death. Creon, however, who is now left in charge of the City, decides, with the con-

¹ *Though, so far as I see, the sole surviving witness of the deed whom he has ultimately—(not immediately, as would Justice Shallon)—sent for to decide the question, had not yet arrived; or, being, as the Chorus surmises, the same who convicts Œdipus of his fatal parentage, is not interrogated at all as to his Father's murder.*

PREFATORY LETTER.

currence of Œdipus' two sons, that banishment will be sufficient accomplished by the Oracle; and Œdipus is accordingly banished. He soon indeed repents of his rash self-denunciation, and prays to be restored to Thebes: but how could that be until Apollo, by Oracle or Augury, should sanction his return, without danger of bringing back the Plague which he took away with him?

And when the Oracle at last declares that Thebes can only secure herself from her enemies by repossessing herself of her old King, it is on the strange condition that she is to keep her treasure, whether alive or dead, upon ^{neighbouring} ~~alien~~ territory, for the very reason that he is polluted by his father's blood. Not a satisfactory arrangement for him, whatever it might be for Thebes. But for this, and for all thus far, the Gods were responsible, not Creon and the sons upon whom he fulminates his wrath.

But when Creon appears, and afterward Polynices, to persuade, if not to force him *home*, he being apprised of their ulterior intentions regarding him, we do not wonder at his blazing up against their selfish duplicity. But | still (vii) it is, I think, their previous ill-usage (as he thinks it), rather than their present design upon him, which mainly supplies the fuel of his wrath.

Now, had his first expulsion been aggravated by unnecessary cruelty and insult on their part; and had they persisted in keeping him out when the Gods, under some favourable auspices, might have been supposed to license his return to Thebes, polluted as he might still be with the blood which had not prevented his reigning there for so

PREFATORY LETTER.

many years before: I think he would have been furnished with such reason for his Fury as would have carried our feelings along with him. And, whatever ancient Legend or Mythology might say, neither of them was very impracticable, had the Poet chosen to deal with them as I have ventured on doing with him.

While doing, as well as saying this, I am sure you will understand that I am not pretending to improve on Sophocles, whether as a Poet or a Dramatist. As for Poetry, I pretend a very little more than representing the old Greek in sufficiently readable English verse: and whatever I have omitted, added, or altered, has been with a view to the English reader To-day, without questioning what was fittest for an Athenian theatre more than two thousand years ago. Those great ancient Tragedians were not, any more than their audiences, nice about such consistencies and probabilities as any modern playwright would provide for, and, so far, be the better for it.

One modification of the original not even the English Scholar—I do not mean, Scholastic—would resent; namely, leaving the terrible story to develope itself no further than needs it must to be intelligible, without being descanted, dwelt, and dilated on, after the fashion of Greek Tragedy.

(viii) As I thought I should ^{do}~~make~~ no better ^{with}~~hand-of~~ the Choruses than old Potter, I have left them, as you see, in his hands, though worthy of a better interpreter than either of us; all of them, I say, excepting the two fragments which might otherwise be imputed to him: one at

PREFATORY LETTER.

page 55 of the First Part, during which Iocasta is supposed to be making her oblations at the altar before the Corinthian Herald interrupts her; and, secondly, at page 129 of the Second Part, by way of giving Theseus a little while before he enters on the scene to which he has been so hastily summoned: and, lastly, the little Choral morality which ends each play. You say that good literal Prose translation would be better than Potter. So think I too in some respects; but with Potter the Lyric *Form*, so essential to the conception of Greek Tragedy, is retained, if nothing else; though some grand piece of appropriate organ music would answer the purpose much better.

What I meant for a written letter has grown to such a length—and long-windedness, I fear—that it shall even go to the printer along with the play which it prates about, and, at any rate, give you no trouble in deciphering. Pray mark down what you see amiss in both; and believe me yours, as ever, sincerely,

LITTLEGRANGE.

THE
DOWNFALL AND DEATH
OF
KING ŒDIPUS.

A Drama in Two Parts.

CHIEFLY TAKEN FROM THE
ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS AND COLONÆUS OF
SOPHOCLES.

THE INTER-ACT CHORUSES ARE FROM POTTER.

PART I.
ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ŒDIPUS, *King of Thebes.*

Iocasta, *his Queen.*

CREON, *her Brother.*

TEIRESIAS, *Prophet of Apollo.*

PRIEST.

HERALD FROM CORINTH.

SHEPHERD OF KING LAIUS.

CHORUS OF THEBAN ELDERS.

The Scene is at THEBES, before the Palace of
KING ŒDIPUS.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

ŒDIPUS, PRIEST *and* SUPPLIANTS *assembled before*
his palace-gate, CHORUS.

Œd. CHILDREN of Cadmus, and as mine to me,
When all that of the plague-struck city can
With lamentation loud, and sacrifice
Beset the shrines and altars of the Gods
Through street and market-^{, by the Temples twain}~~place, or by the tomb~~
Of Pallas, and before the Tomb that shrouds
~~Which shrouds~~ ^{his prophetic} Ismenus' ~~sacred~~ ashes—why
Be you thus gathered at my palace-door,
Mute, with the Suppliant's olive-branch in hand?
Asking, or deprecating, what? which I,
Not satisfied from other lips to learn,
Myself am come to hear it from your own.
You, whose grave aspect and investiture
Announce the chosen oracle of all,
Tell me the purport: I am here, you see,
As King, and Father of his people too,
To listen and what in me lies to do;
For surely mine were but a heart of stone
Not to be moved by such an embassy,
Nor feel my people's sorrows as my own.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Priest. O Œdipus, our Father, and our King!
Of what a mingled company you see
This Supplication gather'd at your door;
Ev'n from the child who scarce has learn'd to creep,
Down to old age that little further can,
With all the strength of life that breathes between.

(6) You know how all the shatter'd city lies
Reeling a-wreck, and cannot right herself
Under the tempest of this pestilence,
That nips the fruitful growth within the bud,
Strangles the struggling blossom in the womb,
With sudden death infects the living man,
Until the realm of Cadmus wastes, and Thebes
With her depopulation Hades feeds.
Therefore, myself and this mute company
In supplication at your altar sit,
Looking to you for succour; looking not
As to a God, but to the Man of men,
Most like the God in man's extremity:
Who, coming here a stranger to the land,
Didst overcome the Witch who with her song
Seduced, and slew the wisest and the best;
For which all but divine deliverance Thebes
Call'd the strange man who sav'd her to the throne
Left void by her hereditary king.
And now the kingdom looks to you once more—

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

To you, the Master of the master-mind,
To save her in a worse extremity:
When men, not one by one, but troop by troop,
Fall by a plague more deadly than the Sphynx,
Till Thebes herself is left to foreign arms
Assailable—for what are wall and tower,
Divinely built and founded as they be,
Without the rampart of the man within?—
And let not what of Cadmus yet survives
From this time forth regard you as the man
Who saved them once, by worse to perish now.

Œd. Alas, my children! telling me of that
My people groans with, knowing not yourselves
How more than any man among you, I,
Who bear the accumulated woes of all;
So that you find me, coming when you may,
Restlessly all day pacing up and down,
Tossing all night upon a sleepless bed,
Endeavouring all that of myself I can,
And all of Heaven implore—thus far in vain.
But if your King have seem'd to pause awhile,
'T is that I wait the issue of one hope,
Which, if accomplish'd, will accomplish all.
Creon, my brother, and my second self
Beside the throne I sit on, to the shrine
Of Delphian Phœbus, man's assur'd appeal

(7)

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

In all his exigence, I have despatch'd:
And long before you gather'd at my door
Within my soul was fretting, lest To-day
That should have lighted him from Delphi back,
Pass over into night, and bring him not.
But come he must, and will; and when he comes,
Do I not all, so far as man may do,
To follow where the God shall point the way,
Denounce me traitor to the State I saved
And to the people who proclaimed me King.

Cho. Your words are as a breath from Delphi, King,
Prophetic of itself; for even now
Fore-running Rumour buzzes in our ear
That he whose coming all await is here.

Œd. And as before the advent of a God,
The moving multitude divides—O Phœbus!
Be but the word he carries back to me
Auspicious as well-timed!

Cho. And shall no less;
For look! the laurel wreath about his brow
Can but announce the herald of Success.

ŒDIPUS, CREON, CHORUS.

Œd. Son of Menœceus! Brother! Brother-king!—
Oh, let impatience for the word you bring
Excuse brief welcome to the messenger!

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Be but the word as welcome!—

Cre. As it shall,

Have you your ancient cunning to divine
The darker word in which the God of Light
Enshrines his answer.

Œd. Speak! for till I hear, (8)
I know not whether most to hope or fear.

Cre. Am I to speak before the people here,
Or to yourself within?

Œd. Here, before all,
Whose common cause it is.

Cre. To all then thus:
When Delphi reach'd, and at the sacred shrine
Lustration, sacrifice and offering made,
I put the question I was charg'd withal,
The Prophetess of the three-footed throne,
Conceiving with the vapour of the God
Which wrapt her, rising from Earth's centre, round,
At length convuls'd to sudden answer broke:

“ O SEVEN-GATED CITY, BY THE LYRE
COMPACT, AND PEOPLED FROM A DRAGON SIRE!
THEBES FEEDS THE PLAGUE THAT SLAYS HER NOURISHING
WITHIN HER WALLS THE SLAYER OF HER KING.”

Œd. The slayer of her King? What king?

Cre. None else
I know than Laius, son of Labdacus,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Who occupied the throne before you came;
That much of Oracle, methinks, is plain.

Œd. A story rises on me from the past.
Laius, the son of Labdacus—of whom
I know indeed, but him I never saw.

Cre. No; he was slain before you set your foot
Over the country's threshold.

Œd. Slain! By whom?

Cre. That to divine were to interpret all
That Œdipus himself is call'd to answer.
Thus much is all we know,
The King was murder'd by some roving band
Of outlaws, who waylaid him on his road
To that same Delphi, whither he had gone
On some such sacred mission as myself.

Œd. Yet of those roving outlaws, one at least
Yet breathes among us in the heart of Thebes.

(9) *Cre.* So saith the Oracle.

Œd. In the midst of all
The citizens and subjects of the King
He slew?

Cre. So saith the Oracle.

Œd. But hold!
The story of this treason—all, you say,
Now known of it, how first made known in Thebes?

Cre. By the one man of the King's retinue,

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Who having 'scaped the fate which took the rest,
As if the assassin's foot were at his heels,
Half dead with fear, just reach'd the city gates
With breath to tell the story.

Œd. And breathes still
To tell it once again?

Cre. I know not that:
For having told it, the bewilder'd man,
As fast as hither he had fled, fled hence,
Where, if the assassin's foot not on him then,
His eye, the God declares, were on him now—
So fled he to his native field again
Among his flocks and fellow-husbandmen.

Œd. And thus the single witness you let slip,
Whose eye might ev'n have singled out the man,
As him the man's!—Oh, had I but been by,
I would have driv'n interrogation home,
Would the bewilder'd memory so have sifted
Of each minutest grain of circumstance—
How many, accoutred how, what people like—
Now by the lapse of time and memory,
Beyond recall into oblivion pass'd!
But not to lose what yet of hope there is—
Let him be sent for, sought for, found and brought.

Cre. Meanwhile, default of him for whom you send,
Or of uncertain memory when he comes,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Were it not well if still the God withhold
His revelation of the word we need,
To question it of his Interpreter?

(10) *Æd.* Of his Interpreter?

Cre. Of whom so well,
As of Teiresias, the blind Seer of Thebes,
Whose years the God hath in his service counted
Beyond all reach of human memory?

Æd. So be it. But I marvel yet why Thebes,
Letting the witness slip, then unpursued,
Or undetected, left the criminal,
Whom the King's blood, by whomsoever spilt,
Cried out aloud to be reveng'd upon.

Cre. What might be done we did. But how detect
The roving robber, in whatever land,
Of friend or foe alike, outlaw'd of all,
Where ever prey to pounce on on the wing,
Or housed in rock or forest, save to him
Unknown, or inaccessible? Besides,
Thebes soon had other business on her hand.

Æd. Why, what of business to engage her more
Than to revenge the murder of her King?

Cre. None other than the riddle-singing Sphinx
Who, till you came to silence her, held Thebes
From thinking of the dead to save herself.

Æd. And leaving *this* which then you might have
guess'd,

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

To guess at that which none of you could solve,
You have brought home a riddle on your heads
Inextricable and more fatal far!
But I, who put the riddling Witch to rest,
This fatal riddle will unravel too,
And by swift execution following
The revelation, once more save the realm,
And wipe away the impiety and shame
Of Laius' yet unexpiated death.
For were no expiation to the God,
And to the welfare of this people due,
Were 't not a shame thus unreveng'd so long
To leave the slaughter of so great a King—
King Laius, the son of Labdacus,
Who from his father Polydore his blood
Direct from Cadmus and Agenor drew?
Shame to myself, who, sitting on the throne
He sate on, wedded to the very Queen
Who should have borne him children, as to me
She bore them, had not an assassin's hand
Divorced them ere their wedded life bore fruit!
Therefore to this as 't were my father's cause,
As of my people's—nay, why not my own,
Who in his death am threaten'd by the hand
Of him, whose eye now follows me about?—
With the Gods' aid do I devote myself.
And hereto let the city's Herald all

(11)

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Her population summon, from my lips
To hear and help in what I shall devise:
And you, that with bow'd head and olive wand,
Have since the dawn been gather'd at my door,
Beseeching me with piteous silence, rise,
And by their altars supplicate the Gods,
And Phœbus chief of all, that he may turn
His yet half-clouded word into full light,
And with one shaft of his unerring bow
Smite dead the Plague which back into the dust
Whence Cadmus raised them lays the People low.

CHORUS.

Thou Oracle of Jove, what fate
From Pytho's golden shrine
Brings to th' illustrious Theban state
Thy sweet-breath'd voice divine?
My trembling heart what terror rends,
While dread suspense on thee attends,
O Delian Pæan, healing pow'r
Daughter of golden Hope, to me,
Blest voice what now dost thou decree,
Or in time's future hour?

(12) Daughter of heav'n's almighty Lord,
Immortal Pallas, hear!

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

And thou, Diana, queen ador'd,
Whose tutelary care
Protects these walls, this favour'd state,
Amidst the forum 'round whose seat
Sublime encircling pillars stand!
God of the distant-wounding bow,
Apollo, hear; avert our woe,
And save the sick'ning land!

This realm when former ills opprest,
If your propitious pow'r
In mercy crush'd the baleful pest,
Outrageous to devour;
In mercy now extend your care,
For all in misery and despair,
And vain the counsels of the wise,
No fruit, no grain to ripeness grows;
The nation feels untimely throes,
The birth abortive dies.

The Shades, as birds of rapid flight,
In quick succession go,
Quick as the flames that flash through night
To Pluto's realms below.
Th' unpeopled town beholds the dead
Wide o'er her putrid pavements spread,
Nor grac'd with tear or obsequy.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

The altars round a mournful band,
The wives, the hoary matrons stand,
And heave the suppliant sigh.

And deep sighs mix'd the hallow'd strain
Bursts fervent to the skies:

Deign then, O radiant Pallas, deign

In all thy might to rise,

(18) From this fierce pow'r, which raging round
Unarm'd inflicts the fiery wound,

Daughter of Jove, my country save;
Hence, goddess, hence the fury sweep
To Amphitrite's chambers deep,
Or the rough Euxine wave!

Doth aught the Night from ruin spare?

The Morning's sickly ray,

Pregnant with death, inflames the air,

And gives disease its prey.

Father of gods, whose matchless force

Wings the red lightning's vengeful course,

With all thy thunders crush this foe!

Potent to aid, Lycéan king,

Thy shafts secure of conquest wing,

And bend thy golden bow!

Thy beams around, Diana, throw,

And pierce this gloom of night,

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

As on Lycæum's moss-clad brow
Thou pour'st thy silver light!
Thy nymphs, O Theban Bacchus, lead,
The golden mitre round thy head,
Grief-soothing god of wine and joy;
Wave thy bright torch, and with its flame
This god, to gods an odious name,
This lurid pest destroy!

ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

Œd. You come to me for counsel; hearken then,
And do as well as hearken, like myself
Following the pointed finger of the God
Which thus far leads us, all may yet be well.
I, Œdipus, albeit no Theban born,
By Thebes herself enthroned her sovereign King,
Thus to the citizens of Thebes proclaim;
That whosoever of them knows by whom
King Laius, son of Labdacus, was slain, (14)
Forthwith let him disclose it undismay'd;
Yea, though the criminal himself he were,
Let not the dread of deadly consequence
Revolt him from confession of the crime;
For he shall suffer nothing worse than this,
Instant departure from the city, but
Uninjur'd, uninsured, unpursued;

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

For though feloniously a King he slew
Yet haply as a stranger unaware
That king was Laius; and thus the crime
Half-clear'd of treason, half absolved by time.
Nor, on the other hand, if any knows
Another guilty, let him not for love,
Or fear, or whatsoever else regard,
Flinch from a revelation that shall win
More from myself than aught he fears to lose—
Nay, as a second saviour of the State
Shall after me be call'd; and who should not
Save a whole people at the cost of one?
But *Him*—that one—who would not at the cost
Of self-confession save himself and all—
Him—were he nearest to my heart and hearth—
Nearest and dearest—thus do I denounce;
That from the very moment that he stands,
By whatsoever, or by whom, reveal'd,
No man shall him bespeak, at home, abroad,
Sit with at table, nor by altar stand,
But, as the very Pestilence he were
Incarnate which this people now devours,
Him slay at once, or hoot and hunt him forth,
With execration from the city walls.
But if, in spite of promise or of threat,
The man who did, or knows who did, this deed,

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Still hold it in his bosom unreveal'd—
That man—and he is here among us now—
Man's vengeance may escape when he forswears
Participation in the crime, but not (15)
The Gods', himself involving in the Curse
Which, with myself and every man in Thebes,
He shall denounce upon the criminal,
~~Involving all~~ ^{invoking to} the Gods, withhold from him
That issue of the earth by which he lives,
That issue of the womb by which himself
Lives after him; that in the deadly curse
By which his fellows perish he and his
May perish, or, if worse there be, by worse!

Cho. Beside Apollo's altar standing here,
That oath I swear, that neither I myself
Nor did myself, nor know who did this deed:
And in the curse I join on him who did,
Or, knowing him who did, will not reveal.

Œd. 'T is well: and, all the city's seven gates closed,
Thus solemnly shall every man in Thebes
Before the altars of his country swear.

Cho. Well have you done, O Master, in so far
As human hand and wit may reach; and lo!
The sacred Seer of Thebes, Teiresias,
To whom, next to the God himself, we look
For Heaven's assistance, at your summons comes,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

In his prophetic raiment, staff in hand,
Approaching, gravely guided as his wont,
But with a step, methinks, unwonted slow.

ŒDIPUS, TEIRESIAS, CHORUS.

Teiresias, Minister and Seer of God,
Who, blind to all that others see without,
See that within to which all else are blind;
Sequester'd as you are with Deity,
You know, what others only know too well,
The mortal sickness that confounds us all;
But you alone can tell the remedy.
For since the God whose Minister you are,
Bids us, if Thebes would be herself again,
Revenge the murder of King Laius
(16) By retribution on the murderer
Who undetected walks among us now;
Unless by you, Teiresias, to whose lips,
As Phœbus his Interpreter we cling,
To catch the single word that he withholds,
And without which what he reveals is vain—
Therefore to you, Teiresias, you alone,
Do look this people and their Ruler—look,
Imploring you, by that same inward light
Which sees, to name the man who lurks unseen,
And whose live presence is the death to all.

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ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Tei. Alas! how worse than vain to be well arm'd
When the man's weapon turns upon himself!

Œd. I know not upon whom that arrow lights.

Tei. If not on him that summon'd, then on him
Who, summon'd, came. There is one remedy;
Let those who hither led me lead me hence.

Œd. Before the single word—which you alone
Can speak—be spoken? How is this, Teiresias,
That to your King on such a summons come,
You come so much distemper'd?

Tei. For the King,
With all his wisdom, knows not what he asks.

Œd. And therefore asks that he may know from you,
Seeing the God hath folded up his word
From human eyesight.

Tei. Why should I reveal
What He I serve has chosen to conceal?

Œd. Is 't not your office to interpret that
To man which he for man vouchsafes from Heaven?

Tei. What Fate hath fixed to come to pass come will,
Whether reveal'd or not.

Œd. I know it must;
But Fate may cancel Fate, foretelling that
Which, unpredicted, else would come to pass.

Tei. Yet none the less I tell you, Œdipus,
That you, though wise, not knowing what you ask,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

I, knowing, shall not answer.

(17) *Œd.* You will not!

Inexorable to the people's cries—

Plague-pitiless, disloyal to your King—

Tei. Oh! you forsooth were taunting me but now
With *my* distemper'd humour—

Œd. Who would not,
When but a word, which you pretend to know,
Would save a people?

Tei. One of them at least
It would not.

Œd. Oh, scarce any man, methinks,
But would himself, though guiltless, sacrifice,
If that would ransom all.

Tei. Yet one, you see,
Obdurate as myself—

Œd. You have not heard, perchance, Teiresias,
(Unless from that prophetic voice within,)
How through the city, by my herald's voice,
With excommunication, death, or banishment,
I have denounced, not him alone who did,
But him who, knowing who, will not reveal?

Tei. I hear it now.

Œd. And are inflexible
To Fear as Pity?

Tei. It might be, to Fear

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Inflexible *by* Pity; else, why fear,
Invulnerable as I am in Truth,
And by the God I serve inviolate?

Œd. Is not your King a Minister of Zeus,
As you of Phœbus, and the King of Thebes
Not more to be insulted or defied
Than any Priest or Augur in his realm?

Tei. Implore, denounce, and threaten as you may,
What unreveal'd I would, I will not say.

Œd. You will not! Mark then how, default of your
Interpretation, I interpret you:
Either not knowing what you feign to know,
You lock your tongue in baffled ignorance;
Or, knowing that which you will not reveal, (18)
I do suspect—Suspect! why, stand you not
Self-accused, self-convicted, and by me
Denounced as he, that knowing him who did,
Will not reveal—nay, might yourself have done
The deed that you with some accomplice plann'd,
Could those blind eyes have aim'd the murderous hand?

Tei. You say so! Now then, listen in your turn
To that one word which, as it leaves my lips,
By your own Curse upon the Criminal
Denounced, should be your last in Thebes to hear.
For by the unerring insight of the God
You question, Zeus his delegate though you be

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Who lay this Theban people under curse
Of revelation of the murderer

Whose undiscovered presence eats away
The people's life—I tell you—You are he!

Cho. Forbear, old man, forbear! And you, my King,
Heed not the passion of provok'd old age.

Æd. And thus, in your blind passion of revenge,
You think to 'scape contempt or punishment
By tossing accusation back on me
Under Apollo's mantle.

Tei. Aye, and more,
Dared you but listen.

Cho. Peace, O peace, old man!

Æd. Nay, let him shoot his poisoned arrows out;
They fall far short of me.

Tei. Not mine, but those
Which Fate had filled my Master's quiver with,
And you have drawn upon yourself.

Æd. Your Master's?
Your Master's; but assuredly not His
To whom you point, albeit you see him not,
In his meridian dazzling overhead,
Who is the God of Truth as well as Light,
And knows as I within myself must know
(19) If memory be not false as Augury,
The words you put into his lips a Lie!

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Not He, but Self—Self only—in revenge
 Of self-convicted ignorance—Self alone,
 Or with some self whom Self would profit by—
 As were it—Creon, say—smooth, subtle Creon,
 Moving by rule and weighing every word
 As in the scales of Justice—but of whom
 Whispers of late have reach'd me—Creon, ha!
 Methinks I scent another Master here!
 Who, wearied of but secondary power
 Under an alien King, and would belike
 Exalt his Prophet for good service done
 Higher than ever by my throne he stood—
 And, now I think on 't, bade me send for you
 Under the mask of Phœbus—

Cho.

Oh, forbear—

Forbear, in turn, my lord and master!

Tei.

Nay,

Let him, in turn, his poison'd arrows, *not*
 From Phœbus' quiver, shoot, but to ^{recoll} ~~return~~
~~On his own head. 'T is natures such as his,~~
~~That on a slight suspicion, self-inflam'd,~~
~~Plaze into sudden wrath, then leave the man~~
~~In his own ashes to repent.~~

When his mad Passion having pass'd—

Œd.

O vain

Prerogative of human majesty,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

That one poor mortal from his fellows takes,
And, with false pomp and honour dressing up,
Lifts idol-like to what men call a Throne,
For all below to worship and assail!
That even the power which unsolicited
By aught but salutary service done
The men of Thebes committed to my hands,
Some, restless under just authority,
Or, jealous of not wielding it themselves,
Ev'n with the altar and the priest collude,
And tamper with, to ruin or to seize!

(20) Prophet and Seer forsooth and Soothsayer!
Why, when the singing Witch contrived the noose
Which strangled all who tried and none could loose,
Where was the Prophet of Apollo then?
'T was not for one who poring purblind down
Over the reeking entrail of the beast,
Nor gaping to the wandering bird in air,
Nor in the empty silence of his soul
Feigning a voice of God inaudible,
Not he, nor any of his tribe—but I—
I, Œdipus, a stranger in the land,
And uninspired by all but mother-wit,
Silenc'd and slew the monster against whom
Divine and human cunning strove in vain.
And now again when tried, and foil'd again,
This Prophet—whether to revenge the past,

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

And to prevent discomfiture to come,
Or by some traitor aiming at my throne
Suborn'd to stand a greater at his side
Than peradventure e'er he stood at mine,
Would drag me to destruction! But beware!
Beware lest, blind and agèd as you are,
Wrapt in supposititious sanctity,
You, and whoever he that leagues with you,
Meet a worse doom than you for me prepare.

Tei. Quick to your vengeance, then; for this same
day

That under Phoebus' fiery rein flies fast
Over the field of heaven, shall be the last
That you shall play the tyrant in.

Œd. O Thebes,
You never called me Tyrant, from the day
Since first I saved you!

Tei. And shall save again;
As then by coming, by departing now.
Enough: before the day that judges both
Decide between us, let them lead me home.

Œd. Aye, lead him hence—home—Hades—any-
where!

Blind in his inward as his outward eye.

Tei. Poor man! that in your inward vision blind, (21)
Know not, as I, that ere this day go down,
By your own hand yourself shall be consign'd

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

To deeper night than now you taunt me with;
When, not the King and Prophet that you were,
But a detested outcast of the land,
With other eyes and hands you feel your way
To wander through the world, begging the bread
Of execration from the stranger's hand
Denied you here, and thrust from door to door,
As though yourself the Plague you brought from
Thebes;
A wretch, self-branded with the double curse
Of such unheard, unnatural infamy,
As shall confound a son in the embrace
Of her who bore him to the sire he slew!

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

All yet is dark. What wretch abhorr'd,
Grasping with blood-stain'd hand his ruthless sword,
From Delphi's high rock-seated shrine
Declares the voice divine
The author of this horrid deed?
Now let him wing his swiftest speed;
The son of Jove upon him flies,
Arm'd with the flames and lightnings of the skies:
Dreadful, resistless in their force
The Fates attend his course.

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ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Antistrophe 1.

The oracle divinely bright
To drag the latent murderer into light
Shone forth, Parnassus, from thy brow
White with eternal snow:
For, like a bull, to secret shades,
To rocks, to caves, to sylvan glades,
Far from the Pythian prophecies (22)
Mournful the solitary wanderer flies:
In vain: they hover round his head,
And ceaseless terrors spread.

Strophe 2.

Dreadful, dreadful things to hear
Utters the prophetic Seer.
Him doth truth, doth falsehood guide?
Fear and hope my soul divide;
Painful suspense! The present and the past
Darkening clouds alike o'ercast,
Was wrong by Laius done of old,
That made the son of Polybus his foe?
Such in no record is enroll'd:
Naught at this hour of proof I know,
Decreeing as the Seer decreed,
To charge on Œdipus the secret deed.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Antistrophe 2.

Jove, high ruler of the skies,
And the Pythian god are wise;
They the deeds of mortals know,
All whate'er is done below:
Of knowledge doth the Seer a brighter ray,
Than illumines me, display?
Some deeper drink of wisdom's spring;
But proofs that flash conviction I demand.
The Sphynx display'd her dreadful wing,
His wisdom saved the sinking land;
Then let my grateful soul disdain
To rank the hero with the murderer's train.

IOCASTA, CHORUS, *then* ŒDIPUS.

Ioc. A noise has reach'd me through the palace-wall
Of words between Teiresias and the King,
In which my brother's name was all misused.
You who were here, and heard, can tell me all.

(28) *Cho.* Words there have been indeed on either side,
By provocation into passion blown,
Which after-thought as likely will disown.

Ioc. But to what purport?

Cho. I would not repeat
What those who utter'd now may wish unsaid,

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Much more, unheard. But look! the King himself
To answer for himself.

Ioc. As one who dreams.
In Heaven's name, husband, tell me what has fired
This wrath between you and Teiresias,
So fierce that e'en my brother Creon's name
Was scorcht withal, and in its ashes now
Still smoulders in your face?

Œd. That has been said
On either side that should not; but on his,
Relying on protection from his God,
Treason so foul against his King—

Ioc. But what?

Œd. Why need tell now, if, as the Prophet says,
This very day shall not go down without
To Thebes, as you, revealing?—What if I—
If I, that have with banishment or death
Denounced the assassin of King Laius—
Myself am he?

Ioc. You! Œdipus?

Œd. So says
Apollo's prophet.

Ioc. You!—Teiresias!—You!
On what presumption, Human or Divine?

Œd. On His whose chariot shall not cross the sky,
But dragging me to Night along with it.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Ioc. Which cannot be—we know, which cannot be
Of the God's self—you of yourself more sure
Than any mortal Prophet sure of Him.

Æd. So might I think. But if not from the God,
From whom then, Iocasta?

Ioc. Only not
(24) From Creon—Whosoever else, not he!—
My brother, and your brother, being mine!

Æd. Yet brother against brother, son 'gainst sire,
Such things have been between them, and shall be,
For things of less ambition than a throne.

Ioc. Oh, strangle such suspicion in its birth
Of one more innocent than babe unborn!
Why, had he minded empire, could he not
Have ^{seized} ~~claimed~~ it for ^{his own} ~~himself~~ before you came,
And Thebes was looking for a sovereign?
Or, after-minded to unseat you King,
Would have contriv'd and hatch'd his priestly plot
Ere you so firmly seated on the throne,
And life with ^{him at least} ~~all of us~~ so much for-spent
As makes ev'n just possession—and much more,
Unjust, of little moment ^{unto} ~~to us~~ all!

Æd. So be it. From the God of Light and Truth
Less likely than from him of Sleep and Dream,
Whose-ever be the Prophet.

Ioc. Had you not

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Provok'd the Prophet first?

Œd. As who would not,
Who either knowing would withhold the word
On which a people's whole salvation hung,
Then, taunted into malice by just wrath,
Or to collusion with some traitor leagued,
Belied his God, and me.

Ioc. The man is old,
And testy, and perhaps incens'd by you,
Mere human passion with the lees
Of Divination mixing—

Œd. Be it so;
And so, methinks, I might have let it pass,
But for a parting threat, which though in wrath
And malice, like the rest it may have been,
Woke up the echo of another Word
Told me by Delphi's self, so long ago
As with its unfulfilment to have died
Almost from memory.

Ioc. What Oracle
Which, if the Prophet fail'd, has fail'd as well?

(25)

Œd. You know I am the son of Polybus,
Of Corinth King, and Merope his Queen,
And till a chance, of which you may not know,
Slight as it seem'd, but fraught with grave result,
Methought the first in Corinth after them.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

One day at table, when the cup went round,
One of the company whom I, belike
Flushed with the wine and youthful insolence,
Had twitted with his meaner parentage,
Bade me beware; for, proudly as I sate
Above them all beside the royal twain
A superstition linger'd, that because
Of some ill-omen'd accident of birth
Their son should never to their throne succeed.
The word awhile sank in the flowing wine,
But when the wine went off the word was there,
And all night long kept stirring in my brain.
So that, with morning when I woke again,
Unable to endure it unsuppress'd,
I challeng'd King and Queen to answer me
The challenge thrown out by the nameless guest.
Indignantly they heard; denounc'd the man,
Whoever it might be, for false or fool,
And with endearing re-assurances
Recomforted me awhile. Nevertheless,
Spite re-assurance and redoubled love,
That random word still rankled in my heart,
And I resolv'd on quenching all misdoubt
From the head fountain of all truth at Delphi.
Thither, without a word of whither gone,
I went, and put my question. But the God

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Vouchsafed no revelation of the past,
But prophesied far worse for me to come;
That I should slay my father: then with her
Who bore me wed, and bring into the world
A race the world would loathe to look upon.
Whereat affrighted—as what man were not?— (26)
From Corinth and from those I was to wrong
I fled—I scarce knew whither, so from them—
Fled hither; and in spite of prophecies,
All that I lost regained, except the bliss
Of prospering in a loving mother's eyes.

Ioc. And see! the father whom you were to slay,
With that Queen-mother whom you were to wed,
Lives to a ripe old age in Corinth, far
Beyond his reach who should have wrong'd them both,
Himself fast wedded and enthroned in Thebes!

Œd. And yet this blunted shaft of long ago,
And rusted with oblivion, had the Seer
Snatch'd from his Master's armoury To-day,
For malediction's last and master blow!

Ioc. Which from his Master's hand had fail'd before!
And would you listen to a woman's voice
I could requite your story, Œdipus,
With one so like as almost to be one,
Save that in mine the Sire it was who foil'd
Predestination, as in yours the Son.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Œd. In this dumb pause between despair and hope,
Whose voice to me more welcome than your own?

Ioc. When first I wedded with King Laius,
Whose murder now perplexes Thebes and you,
A Prophecy from Delphi reached his ears—
But whether from the God, or from his Priest,
I know not—but there went the Prophecy;
That he should die slain by the hand of him
Who should be born between himself and me.
Whereat, like you, affrighted, when the child
But three days born had seen the light of day,
He had him, spite of all a mother's cries,
Not slain, but left in some such desert place
As where with cold and hunger, he must die.
So, at the sacrifice of that poor life
Saving his own, he lived himself in peace,
(27) Till slain—not as the Oracle foretold
Slain by the son himself had slain before,
But by that undetected alien hand
Which the fond Prophet pointed at in you.
Of such account are such vaticinations,
Whether from Phoebus, or his Minister;
Of which take you no heed. For, surely, what
Fate has determin'd, Fate shall bring to pass,
Whether by prophecy foretold or not.
Œd. So seems it.

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Ioc. Nay, beyond denial *is*.
And yet you seem to hesitate as one
Who in broad daylight cannot see his way.

Œd. Was it not said that Laius your King
Upon some sacred errand by the road
Was set upon and murdered?

Ioc. Even so;
To that same Delphi where yourself had been,
As much to be misled.

Œd. And whereabouts?

Ioc. Somewhere in Phocis which his road went
through;
As went the story.

Œd. And how long ago?

Ioc. Nay, just before you came to Thebes yourself
To save us from the Sphynx, and occupy
The throne left empty by my husband's death.
What makes you muse?

Œd. And this King Laius
About what age, and what to look upon?

Ioc. Lofty and large of stature, and of port
And aspect that becomes a King; his hair
Just whitening with the earliest frost of age—

Œd. And how accompanied?

Ioc. With such a train
Accompanied as may become a King

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Upon a peaceful errand of his own,
And through a friendly people travelling.

(28) *Œd.* And, as the story went, but one of those
Who, witnessing, escaped to tell the tale.

Ioc. Ev'n so it was.

Œd. And him they let depart
With half his tale untold?

Ioc. Nay, all he could,
Half dead with terror. Meanwhile Œdipus,
What is 't that, when I thought to clear your brow
With dissipation of prophetic fear,
Darkens it more and more?

Œd. Is it not strange—
Strange—that your second husband, like your first,
With such a cross-related Prophecy
Threatened, like him should have defeated it?

Ioc. Strange as it is, but most assuredly.

Œd. O Iocasta, what if secret Fate
Aveng'd the God, who sometimes speaks for her,
Two thwarted utterances by one blow
On Laius and myself unpropheied?

Ioc. I know not what this aims at.

Œd. You shall hear.
When, as I told you, in my youth at Corinth,
I had resolv'd to cross that Prophecy
Which from the God's own lips myself had heard,

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

By flying those I was foredoom'd to wrong—
Nay, from the very country of my birth,
Leaving them all behind me for the stars
Alone to tell me of their whereabouts,
I fled: and flying as at random on,
I came—now mark me, Iocasta, came—
Whether in Phocis, or elsewhere, I know not—
Where two main roads which lead two nations on
To Delphi, shrink into a narrow gorge;
When, coming up the narrow road, Behold!
A Herald first, and then a chariot,
In which, erect beside his charioteer,
There rode the stately semblance of a King,
And so came on, not swerving left or right,
As if the road were but for them, and I (29)
A cur, to slink aside and let them by.
Whereat, no cur, but a King's son, enrag'd,
With the stout staff I carried in my hand
I smote the charioteer; on which the King
Struck me with his—for which he paid too dear
With such a fatal counter-blow from mine
As roll'd him headlong dead into the dust;
And after him his Herald, and all his
Who came against me one by one I slew.
Now if the royal man—for such he was—
Were—as by such consent of circumstance

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

I scarce dare think were not—

Ioc. Oh, many a King
Of a like presence, and like retinue,
Has been that road to learn the word of Fate
Which he, like you, had vainly learn'd before.

Æd. But one escaped, they say; and if he live—
And if maintain the tale that first he told,
That Laius, not by one, but many men,
Was in his chariot set upon and slain,
Then was it surely not King Laius
Whom single-handed, and alone, I slew.
But if he falter from that first report—

Ioc. How should he?

Æd. Whether out of present fear,
Or after, to excuse a coward flight,
One man to numbers multiply he might—

Ioc. He cannot—whether by device or fear,
He cannot falter from his first report—
Unless the sudden presence of his King,
And the disquiet of your looks affright him
Into the confirmation of false fear.
But meanwhile, Ædipus, come in with me,
And let not troubled Thebes new troubles see
Writ in your brows, augmenting present ill,
And Prophecy that Fate shall not fulfil.

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

CHORUS.

(30)

Strophe 1.

Fair Fortune deign with me to dwell,
My soul if holy reverence awes,
By thinking, speaking, acting well,
To bow obedient to the Laws.
From heav'n they draw their lineage high,
And tread with stately step the sky:
Their father the Olympian king;
No mixture of man's mortal mould;
Nor shall Oblivion's sable wing
In shades their active virtues fold.
In them the god is great, nor fears
The withering waste of years.

Antistrophe 1.

The tyrant Pride engenders. Pride
With wealth o'erfilled, with greatness vain,
Mounting with Outrage at her side,
The splendid summit if she gain,
Falls headlong from the dangerous brow,
Down dash'd to ruin's gulf below.
Not so our monarch; for of old,
His contest glorious to the state,

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THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

In her own blood the Fury roll'd:
So may the god now guide his fate!
Still be the god's protection mine,
Strong in his power divine!

Strophe 2.

But should some wretch, contemptuous, bold,
Brave the just gods, his hands with slaughter stain,
The vengeful pow'rs of heav'n disdain,
Nor their pure seats in holy reverence hold,
Him may Perdition sweep away,
(31) And thus his wanton pride repay;
Him too, whom wild Ambition prompts to seize,
Though Justice cries aloud, forbear.
Can all his vaunts, who dares attempts like these,
Guard his proud heart from guilty fear?
Such deeds if glory waits, in vain
I lead this choral train.

Antistrophe 2.

No more at Delphi's central cell,
At Abæ, or Olympia's hallow'd shrine,
Attendant pay I rites divine,
Till the god deigns this darkness to dispel.
O Jove, if thee we rightly call
The sovereign lord, the king of all,

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Let not concealment this in shades enfold
From thee, and thy immortal reign!
The oracles, to Laius giv'n of old,
They spurn with insolent disdain,
No more to Phœbus honours pay;
And things divine decay.

IOCASTA, CHORUS.

Ioc. Ancients of Thebes, in this extremity
When ev'n the very steersman of the realm,
To whom we look for our deliverance,
Veering himself with every wind that blows
Of rumour, helplessly resigns the helm,
I come, albeit with these poor woman's hands,
To offer wreath and incense on the shrines
And altars of our tutelary Gods;
And first to thee, Apollo, first to thee,
Whose altar nearest to the palace stands,
And on whose word depends the life of Thebes,
Lest any unconsidered word against
Thy Minister, revolt thy face from us;
Imploring thee with all the Gods in Heav'n
To help where all of human help is vain.

CHORUS.

(32)

Barb'd with Death, there are among
The gold-enquiver'd arrows hung

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

About Apollo's shoulder; whence,
As over heav'n his chariot burns,
The land he loves to harvest turns,
And cities swell with opulence;
Ev'n so, where yet unexpiated sin
Cries out, or undetected lurks within,
The God his lustre turns to pestilence;
And contrite man must worship and abide,
Till, Nemesis and Justice satisfied,
When men least dream it, one relenting ray—
Oh grant, Apollo, grant it as we pray!—
Strikes through sheer midnight, and lets in the
day.

HERALD, IOCASTA, CHORUS.

Her. Tell me who will among you, men of Thebes,
Which is the palace of King Œdipus,
And, further, if the King himself within?

Cho. This is the palace; and the King himself
Within; and she that by the altar stands
Offering her garland to the God, his Queen.

Her. Oh, to the prayer she offers at the shrine
She lays the wreath on, be the God benign!

Ioc. A Herald! Whence, and on what embassy?

Her. From Corinth, as the message that I bring.

Ioc. Good may the tidings be where all goes ill.

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Her. If, as things human, not unmix'd with pain,
To you and yours auspicious in the main.

Ioc. So far so well; but tell me—

Her. This in sum—

The citizens of Corinth, by my voice,
Proclaim King Œdipus of Thebes their King.

Ioc. Œdipus King of Corinth?

Her. Even so.

Ioc. But does not Polybus in Corinth reign?

Her. No; the long years that kept him on the Throne, (ss)
At length have laid him in his father's tomb.

Ioc. The King of Corinth dead! Polybus dead!
Summon the King! You Oracles of Heaven,
Of what account shall men hereafter hold
Your Ministers—or you? This was the Sire
Whom Œdipus, for fear of slaying, fled,
Now by the common course of Nature dead!

ŒDIPUS, IOCASTA, HERALD, CHORUS.

Œd. What tidings? Is the man I sent for here?

Ioc. Not he, but one whose coming shall go far
To make his coming needless. Herald, speak.

Her. I come from Corinth, by the people there
Charg'd with a mission to King Œdipus,
Whom, in the room of Polybus now dead,
They call upon to fill the sovereign chair.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Œd. My father dead?

Ioc. And by no hand of yours!

Her. No, nor by any hand but Nature's own,
That lightly rocks, you know, old age to sleep.

Œd. And this is he whom by the Oracle
From Phœbus his own lips, myself I heard
Foredoom'd to slay—

Yet with whose death I have no more to do
Than leaving him to languish for his son
Whose hand was to have slain him had he stay'd!

Ioc. Did not I say?

Œd. But who would not be scared
By such prediction from the God himself—
Of which yet half hangs dark above my head!

Ioc. This word from Corinth is a Signal-fire
Assuring us that Oracle, half slain,
Must all lie buried in your father's tomb.

Œd. The agèd King is dead, you tell me, Herald—
But Merope, his Queen?

Her. Lives, and may live
As one that hath not reached her winter yet;
(34) And longer yet to live if you return,

Whose sudden flight from Corinth neither she
Nor Corinth cease to wonder at, and mourn.

Œd. Yet, Herald, she herself it was whose love,
That would have held me there, thence banish'd me.

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Her. If one, a simple subject as I am,
Might ask of him he now salutes for King—

Œd. A Prophecy of Phœbus, from the lips
Of Phœbus' self, and utter'd in these ears,
Involving me in worse calamity
With Merope, my mother, who survives,
Than by my father's death I have escap'd.

Her. I understand not wholly, but thus much,
That 't was the fear of some mysterious wrong
Against them both which drove you from their side
And from your country.

Œd. That, and that alone.

Her. I know not if for better or for worse,
But certainly for strangest, Œdipus,
If now for the first time, and from my lips,
You learn that you are not indeed the son
Of those you fled from in that two-fold fear.

Œd. You seem a loyal as well-season'd man,
As near in age to him you lately serv'd
As trusted, and I think to me and mine
Well-minded now.

Her. If not, I had not told
What told I have.

Œd. And would reiterate?

Her. By the most solemn oath by which mankind
Adjure the Gods to witness human word.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Œd. That I am not in very deed the son
Of Polybus, and Merope his Queen?

Her. No more their son than—might I so dare say,
Than son of mine—and that is, not at all.

Œd. But was this known in Corinth?

Her. To none else
Save to the King and Queen themselves, and me.

(35) *Œd.* Yet 't was in Corinth when the cup went round
At table, that a guest once startled me
With a light taunt of somewhat like to that
Which now you gravely tell.

Her. The random shot
Of idleness, or malice freed by wine,
That sometimes nears the mark.

Œd. But how was it
That only you beside the King and Queen
Knew for a truth?

Her. Would Œdipus know all?

Œd. Yea—on the allegiance you profess to him,
Whom now you have saluted as your King.

Her. Thus then I know it: for that I alone
Laid you a new-born babe into their hands
Who, childless as they were, and like to be,
Ev'n took what fortune sent them for their own.

Cho. This man bears stranger tidings from himself
Than from his country he was charg'd withal.

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Œd. You—and you solely—brought me to their
hands—

From whose receiv'd me then?

Ioc. O Œdipus,

When all, beyond all hope, has ended well,
Why tempt the God, still jealous of success,
By questioning the means?

Œd. I bid you speak!

Her. You charge me for an answer, Œdipus,
Which, were you not my King who bids me speak,
Yet might resent when spoken—

Œd. But one word
Of ev'n unwelcome truth from human lip
Were welcome in the night of mystery
That Fate has gather'd round me.

Her. Listen, then.
Long ere in favour of these whitening locks,
And recompense of faithful service done,
King Polybus had made me what I am,
I was his shepherd; and, upon a time
Keeping my flock upon Kithæron's side,
One of like calling with myself, though not
Of the same country, who that summer through
Had fed his sheep beside me, came one day,
And listening first, and looking all about,
With those rough hands of his he laid in mine

(36)

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

As tenderly as any mother might,
A naked infant—say, some three days born—
And fasten'd foot to foot, like some poor lamb,
Which some one of the land from which he came,
Warm from the bosom of its mother took
To perish on the barren mountain's side,
Of cold and hunger. Which the kindly man
Not finding in himself the heart to do,
But yet as fearful if he left undone,
Gave you—for you, King Œdipus, it was—
The very name you bear, remembering
The pitiful condition of the babe—
Gave you to me, to carry far away
And pitifully cherish for my own
Beyond all search of those who wish'd you dead.
So to his country he, and I to mine:
Which when I reach'd, and to my King and Queen
Show'd them the prettiest lamb of all my flock,
They, whether by some instinct of their own
Inspired, or somewhat royal in the Child
Prophetic of the Man that was to be,
Took, nurs'd, and reared to manhood for their own,
And set beside themselves upon the throne.

Cho. The Gods upon the mountain-top, men tell,
Do sometimes light, and through the tangled dell
And forest-shade—

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Œd. A shepherd like yourself,
But not of Corinth. Whence then?

Her. Thebes, he said,
To which your destiny recall'd you.

Œd. Thebes! (87)

Ioc. O Œdipus, by all the Gods in heav'n,
And all that upon earth you hold most dear,
Heed not these stories of the past, patch'd up
By the fallacious memory of old age!

Œd. He were by nature baser than base-born
Who would not find and follow to its source
The current of the blood by which he lives.
This Shepherd—and from whom took he the child—
Charg'd with that ruthless errand?

Her. Either I
With mine own duty busied did not ask,
Or he not answer.

Œd. But to answer lives?

Her. Those of his country best can answer that.

Œd. Does any man of all the people here
Remember such a man?

Cho. Maybe the same
Already sent for, who, as I remember,
Like this good Herald, shepherded the flocks
Of Laius, ^{then our Master.} ~~ere he left them.~~ But the Queen—

Ioc. No more! no more! For your sake, Œdipus,

If not for mine—no more!

My birth betray, your blood it cannot taint;

Three generations deep in slavery.

Æd. If aught you know—and your wild looks and words

At once reveal it all: for ask I will

Ioc. Wretched man! the last

These lips shall ever utter you have heard!

Cho. She is gone as one distracted. O my Lord,
What should this sudden passion of the Queen
Forebode of ill!

(88) *Æd.* Forebode what ill it may,

But I will solve the riddle of my birth.

The Queen belike, of royal birth herself

And haughty-minded as such women are,

Resents her husband's baser parentage;

But I, regardless of the accident

That oft from royal blood provokes a slave,

I do account myself the royal heir

Of Destiny, who found me where I lay,

By man's blind foresight which defeats itself

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Cradled to perish on Kithæron's side,
And taking from a simple shepherd's hand,
So laid me in the lap of Royalty,
And through the days and years of human growth
Rear'd to the kingly stature that I am.
And when, affrighted by vain prophecies,
From Corinth, and the throne prepared me there,
I fled, inalienable Destiny
Pursuing drove me but from throne to throne,
Till, doubling back my course to reach my height,
Now Thebes and Corinth claim me for their own.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

If a prophet's soul be mine
Aught illumed with skill divine,
By Olympus' sacred height,
Ere the morning's streaming light,
Thou, Kithæron, shalt unfold
All this mystery round thee roll'd,
And with pride and triumph own
Œdipus thy foster'd son.
Then with joy would we advance,
Leading light the festive dance;
Teach thy woods with joy to ring,
And with transport hail our king.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

(39)

Glorious with thy silver bow
Phœbus, these our joys allow!

Antistrophe.

Who, of all the heav'nly pow'rs,
Gave thee birth in these close bow'rs?
Some bright Nymph of sylvan race
Did the frolic Pan embrace,
Wand'ring o'er the mountain's brow?
Or to Phœbus dost thou owe
Thy birth? From him the craggy height,
Him the pastur'd dales delight.
Or to him, the god who roves
Through Cyllene's cypress groves?
Or did Bacchus, wont to tread
His loved haunt, the mountain's head,
Thee receive, confess'd his son,
From the Nymphs of Helicon?
Raptur'd with their tuneful strain
Sportive oft he joins their train.

ŒDIPUS, SHEPHERD, HERALD, CHORUS.

Œd. Whether or not the man we have so long
Been looking after, one at least whose age
Evens with his whose story we have heard.

Cho. Whether the same of whom the stranger tells
I know not, but the man himself I know

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

For an old shepherd of King Laius.

Her. And I for him with whom I shepherded
Upon Kithæron's side so long ago.

Œd. Approach, old man—still nearer—unafraid;
For nothing but my favour need you fear,
If, looking straight at me, as I at you,
Straightforwardly you answer what I ask.
You, in the days gone by, and long ere Time
Had strewn his silver honour on your head— (40)
You were a servant of King Laius?

Shep. His servant—not his slave—no less than he,
Myself a freeman of the soil of Thebes.

Œd. As such I understand; and in that wise,
As a free servant of King Laius,
You kept his flocks?

Shep. Upon a time I might.

Œd. And folding them at home in winter-time,
Led them in Summer forth?

Shep. So shepherds use,
Where'er the more and sweeter pasture grew.

Œd. And ever on Kithæron's grassy sides
In summer-time, remember you this man,
Old as yourself, keeping his flock with yours?

Shep. Time that has silver'd, as you say, my locks,
Has somewhat dimm'd my eyes and memory.

Œd. None older than your fellow-shepherd here,
Who with his locks as silver-touch'd as yours,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Sees, and recalls in you the man of yore.

~~Sees with his eyes, and well remembers you.~~

Shep. May be; but all men are not all alike,
And he may err as well remembering me,
As I forgetting him.

Her. Listen to me,
And let my voice, and what it has to tell,
Recall to you the man your eyes do not.
Can you not call to mind, though long ago,
Keeping your flock with one whose flock, like yours,
Grazed on Kithæron, one long summer through—

Shep. With more than one, may be.

Her. Nay, but with one
To whom, just as that same long summer closed,
And cold Arcturus warn'd the shepherd home,
You brought a naked infant—

Shep. Brought? Who brought?

Her. Tied by the feet—

Shep. What should one know of that?

Her. Being myself the man you gave it to.

(41) *Shep.* Methinks this man, whoever he may be,
And howsoever gifted with good eyes,
Is something weaker in his wits than I,
Recounting all such idle rhapsody.

Æd. And you, sharp-witted as you are, methinks
Seem looking round about you for escape
In hesitation—but escape shall not.

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Look you! Beware!

Shep. What have I said amiss?

Œd. Not said, but will not say.

Shep. What would you have?

Œd. The babe your fellow-shepherd asks about—
That naked, new-born, ankle-fetter'd babe,
Did not you bring and put into his hands?

Shep. And would to Heaven had died before I did!

Œd. And death you shall not have to pray for long,
If knowing what prevarication proves
You know, you not reveal.

Shep. And if reveal!
Have you not heard enough?

Œd. No, if not all.
The babe you put into this shepherd's hands
Was not your own?

Shep. Oh, not mine own!

Œd. Then whose?

Shep. O Œdipus, my master, and my lord!
In mercy question me no more!

Œd. No more
In mercy if you answer not at once.

Shep. O me! The terror of your countenance
Scatters what little memory age has left!
What if I found the little helpless thing
There laid alone and none to tell me whose?

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Or he from whom I took it knew no more
Than he to whom I gave it?

Æd. Bind his hands:
The lash must loose the tongue.

(42) *Shep.* O Ædipus,
Shame not white hairs!

Æd. Nay, shame them not yourself
By false prevarication with your King.
That helpless babe—me—Ædipus—your King—
Who gave into your hands?

Shep. Alas! alas!
One of the household of the King that was!—

Æd. Slave? Servant? Who?

Shep. Alas! one now within
Can answer all!

Æd. Answer yourself then, who?

Shep. Woe 's me! I drift into destruction's mouth!

Æd. And I with you. But who?

Shep. Alas! The Queen!

Æd. The Queen!

Shep. Ev'n Iocasta's sacred self!

Æd. But not her own?

Shep. I said not that—

Æd. Her own?

Shep. Yourself have said!

Cho. The man is turn'd to stone!

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

[*After a silence*]

Œd. The God of Delphi has reveng'd himself!
His oracle defied of long ago,
And his insulted prophet's of to-day,
Break in one judgment o'er my head, who now,
Myself sole witness and interpreter,
Divine that half reveal'd is all fulfilled,¹
And on myself myself pronounce my doom.

Cho. O Œdipus, my lord—

Œd. Speak to me not,
Approach me not, unless at once to slay,
Or thrust with execration from the walls,
The wretch convicted of the double crime
Of parricide, and—Ha! the prophet said (43)
That ere the Day which all beholds go down,
I shall have look'd my last upon the Sun
Which all accomplishes—and, ere we pass
To darkness, somewhat yet is to be done.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

Ye race of mortals, what your state?
Life I an airy nothing deem.

¹ *In the original, if I mistake not, Œdipus convicts himself of murdering his Father without asking the evidence of the Witness he has sent for.*

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

For what, ah! what your happiest fate,
More than light fancy's high-wrought dream?
How soon those baseless dreams decay,
And all the glittering visions melt away!
Whilst thy example, hapless King,
Thy life, thy fortune I bewail,
Happy no man of mortal birth I hail.
Thine was no vulgar fate: its tow'ring wing
To wealth, and empire's splendid summit soar'd:
When, silenc'd her mysterious lore,
The harpy-talon'd monster scream'd no more,
Our bulwark thou against that pest abhorr'd,
Thebes gave her sceptre to thy honour'd hand,
And hail'd thee monarch of a mighty land.

Antistrophe.

Who now is pierc'd with keener pain?
To all thy glories bid farewell:
They fly, and in their stead a train
Of miseries crowd with thee to dwell.
To one great port, illustrious king,
Their gallant barks the son and father bring;
But sink in wild waves roaring round.
How could thy father's bed so long,
Ah, how in silence bear the horrid wrong!
(44) But thee th' all-seeing eye of time hath found,

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

And these unhallow'd rites abhorrent shows.

O son of Laius, ne'er again,
Ne'er could my sorrowing heart thy sight sustain:
Yet I lament in mournful strains thy woes,
By thee 't was mine to life, to light, to rise;
By thee in dark despair to close my eyes.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Mess. O venerable Senators of Thebes,
O liege-men of the house of Labdacus,
What shall you ~~now not~~ hear—what not behold—of such
^{Pollution.}
~~Of horror~~ in the Palace of your Kings,
Which all the waters in one volume drown'd
Of Nile and Ister could not wash away!

Cho. What we already have beheld and heard
Were but prophetic of yet worse to come;
Tell us the worst.

Mess. If breath I have to tell,
If not the worst, the worse that first befell.
The light of Iocasta's life is quench'd!

Cho. Alas, not strange as terrible! But how?

Mess. By her own hand; as by my eyes indeed
I cannot, but from others can, avouch,
With such bewilder'd senses as I may—
When, as you witness'd for yourselves, from hence

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

She fled, and flew distractedly within,
Shrieking, and tearing her gray locks, she ran
Along the echoing walls until she reach'd
The nuptial chamber, shot the bolt within,
And by the affrighted women lock'd without
Was heard calling on 'Laius, Laius!
Her husband Laius, father of the Son
Who slew, and worse dishonour'd him when dead!'
This, and much more, and much more terrible,
(45) They heard: and then a silence as of death,
Through all the house; till with the sudden yell
As of some wild beast closing on his prey,
King Ædipus along the corridor
With imprecations half articulate,
Fearful to hear—too fearful to relate—
With thrice the force of the mad Herakles
He flung himself against the chamber-door,
And bursting in, to all who dared to look
Disclosed the wretched woman hanging dead.
Whom when he saw, roaring, he sprang upon,
And tearing from the beam flung down aheap,
And spurn'd; and then, most horrible of all,
Wide open tore the raiment from her breast,
From which himself recoiling with a shriek,
He struck the golden clasp into his eyes,

ŒDIPUS IN THEBES.

Which having seen such things, henceforth, he said,

Should in the ^{light of Day behold no more} ~~night of Hades~~ look on those

~~Those whom he loved, nor, in the after-dark~~

~~He loath'd to look on, and behold no more~~
~~Of Hades, those he loathed, to look upon.~~

~~Those who in life were dearest to his eyes.~~

Then rising, blind, and bleeding as he was,

He groped and stagger'd back the way he came,

Vociferating as he went along

That none who would not share the curse with him

Should touch unless to slay him—till he reach'd

The palace-door, and would, methinks, have that,

As of the nuptial chamber, open burst,

Had not King Creon bid them lead him in

Where none henceforth should hear, and none behold,

Till Thebes his fate determine—All is told.

CHORUS.

(46)

Oh men of Thebes, this famous man behold,

Who coming here a stranger to the gate,

The Sphynx's fatal riddle did unfold,

And, chosen King, as Saviour of the State,

~~So greatly ruled, and rose to such Renown~~

~~To such a pitch of power and glory rose,~~

^{now by Fate}

As not a King but envied: ~~his estate,~~

~~To such a Depth precipitated down~~

~~Now to that depth of degradation sunk~~

As not a Wretch but may commiserate.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Beholding which, and counsell'd by the wise,
That Nemesis regards with jealous eyes
Man's over-much, and at his elbow stands
To shake the full cup in the steadiest hands,
Deem not the wisest of To-morrow sure,
Nor fortunate account him till he dies.

PART II.
ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ŒDIPUS.

ANTIGONE, *his Daughter.*

POLYNICES, *his Son.*

CREON OF THEBES.

THESEUS, *King of Athens.*

AN ATHENIAN CITIZEN.

AN ATHENIAN MESSENGER.

HERALD FROM THEBES.

CHORUS OF ATHENIAN ELDERS.

SCENE: *A road near ATHENS, bordered by the Sacred
GROVE of the EUMENIDES.*

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE.

Œd. The dawn which breaks not on my sightless
eyes

Salutes my forehead with reviving warmth:
Here let us rest awhile, Antigone,
From this brief travel stol'n by fear from night.
But know you whither it hath led us, and
Among what strangers, who from charity
Shall with sufficient for the day provide
For one with less than little satisfied?

Ant. I know from one who cross'd us in the dusk
With steps as hurried as our own, the land
Is Attica.

Œd. ^{Ay, I remember now.}
~~The Gods for that be praised!~~

Ant. And not far off I see the shining walls
And marble temple-fronts, and citadel,
As of some stately city: and the place
We stand on, as for some peculiar use
Sequester'd from the daily track of men,
Where a pure rill of water rambles through

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THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Untrampled herbage, overshadowed all
With laurel, and with olive, poplar-topt,
As you may guess from many a nightingale
About us warbling, well assured of home.

Œd. And might not, haply, some poor hunted thing,
With but a sorry burden for his song,
Here, too, some breathing-while of refuge find?

Ant. And in good time comes of the country one
Who shall advise us, lest, as strangers here,
We trespass on the usages of those
To whom we look for shelter and support.

(6) *Enter an ATHENIAN.*

O stranger—

Ath. Hush! Before another word—
Where ev'n a word unlawful—how much more
With the soil'd foot of Travel trespassing
~~Profaning will unconsecrated feet~~
On
~~This~~ consecrated ground!

Œd. I yet dare ask
Whether to Deity or Demigod,
Thus consecrate?

Ath. To Deity, and such
As least of all will Men's intrusion brook
Within their ^{hallow'd} ~~sacred~~ precincts.

Œd. Who be they?

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Ath. None other but those awful Sisters Three,
Daughters of Earth and Darkness.

Œd. By what name
Invoked of men?

Ath. By whatsoever name
Elsewhere invoked, here, with averted eyes,
And ^{with} ~~but~~ an inward whisper—"The Benign."

Œd. Benign then, as their name and nature is
To those who suffer and who do no wrong,
May they receive the sightless suppliant, who,
By no false Insight, howbeit unaware,
~~Who by no sightless insight setting foot~~
Within their Sanctuary first setting foot,
~~A stranger on their consecrated ground,~~
Alive shall never leave it but to die.

Ath. Your words I understand not; but I know,
Whether to live or die, depart you must.

Œd. But what, if rather fearing unjust Man
Than the just God, and those same awful Three,
If stern to guilt, not unbenign to me,
I leave their hallow'd refuge?

Ath. Nay, for that
The land itself is ^{dedicated} ~~consecrated~~ all
To God or Demigod, who, Just themselves,
Protect and vindicate the Just: for here
Poseidon rules, the Master of the Seas,
And there Prometheus, with his torch of Life;
The ground about us glories in the name

(7)

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Of King Colonus of the Horse; and this
Same highway running by the Sacred Grove
Leads to the ^{City and the Citadel} ~~Citadel that bears Her name,~~
^{Surnamed of Her who keeps them for her own.}
~~To whom the City's self is dedicate.~~

Æd. As such do I salute her!—And the King
That, under her, her chosen people rules—

Ath. Theseus, the son of Ægeus, and, like him,
Though mortal yet, almost the Demigod.

Æd. Theseus, the son of Ægeus,—aye, I know
And know indeed that no delusive light
Led me to him with whom I have to do.
Shall one among your fellow-citizens
Bear your King word from one who once was King,
And who, unkinglike as his presence now,
Can tell him that which, if he hearken to,
Shall, for a little service done to me,
Do to his kingdom and himself much more?

Ath. Strange as the message from so strange a man,
Yet shall King Theseus hear of it. Meanwhile,
If in despite of warning and advice
You still refuse to leave ^{this holy} ~~forbidden~~ ground,
I, that am but a simple citizen,
Dare not enforce; but forthwith shall apprise
Those of the City who shall deal with you,
As in their wisdom best they shall advise.

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE.

Œd. Is he departed?

Ant. We are all alone.

Œd. Daughters of Earth and Darkness! In whose
womb .

Unborn till Sovereign Order the new World
From Chaos woke, yourselves you still secrete,
With those three Fatal Sisters who the thread (8)
Of Human Life do spin among the Dead,
While you the scourge of human Wrong prepare;
If peradventure with unlicens'd feet
The consecrated earth I have profaned,
That veils your Presence from this upper air,
Repudiate me not: no, nor ^{in me} the God
Who destined, nor the God who prophesied,
That, after drifting the blind wreck I am
About the world, a Horror to Mankind,
Within the ^{Temple of that Triple wrath} ~~very temple of your wrath~~
That Nemesis unyoked to scourge me down.
At last the haven of my rest should find;
If satisfied at last be wrath Divine,
And men err not who name its ministers,
Though not without a shudder—"The Benign,"
Let your avenging Justice, that so long
Hath chased the guiltless instrument of Wrong,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Here ^{grant} ~~let~~ him rest until the Power whose throne
You dwell beside in Darkness give the sign.

CHORUS, ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE.

Cho. These are the strangers—this the sightless man,
And this the maiden that he told us of,
Who impiously this consecrated ground
Have ventured to profane.

Œd. Not impiously,
But ignorantly, who first setting foot
Upon this alien soil—

Cho. But impiously,
When warn'd upon what consecrated ground,
With honey-flowing waters running through
The inviolable herbage, still persist—
A stranger too, where no Athenian born,
Not only dares not enter, but pass by
Save with averted eyes, and inward prayer,
That holy lips scarce dare articulate.

(9) *Ant.* We must obey them, Father, as we should.

Œd. You will not, if I quit the Sanctuary,
Do, nor let others do me violence?

Cho. Fear not the wrath of men, but that of those
Who watch you through the soil which you profane.

Œd. But who, if of their counsel more you knew,
As sooner than you look for know you may,

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Would not resent, as you, the wrong I do to them.
Meanwhile, on no worse usage than from them
Relying when committed to your hands—
Lead me, Antigone.

Cho. Till you have pass'd
The bound of sequestration—further yet—
And yet a little further—So, enough.
There, travel-wearied, and, methinks, in years
Well stricken, rest upon the bank awhile.
But, ere I bid you welcome to the land
Whose sanctity your foot at first profaned,
Tell who you are, and whence.

Œd. To tell you “ Who ”
Would tell you all: and if I hesitate—

Cho. Not to declare your country and your name
Augurs but evil for yourself or it.

Œd. You of that City have heard tell, whose walls
To Music rose, and whose Inhabitants,
From the sown Dragon's teeth sprung up arm'd men?

Cho. Of Thebes? Aye, much of olden times, and of
The worse than Dragon Sphynx that in our day
The Dragon seed devour'd.

Œd. And of the man
Who slew that worse than Dragon—

Cho. Œdipus!
As by the signal of those sightless eyes,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

And lingering self-avowal, I divine—

Œd. Revolt not from me.

Cho.

And for You! For You—

May be, the monster most unnatural—

(10) To set your foot upon the holiest spot
Of this all-consecrated Athens! You!
Who, were your very presence not enow
Contamination to the land, and shame,
May bring on us the plague you left at Thebes!
I should not wrong a promise half implied
If with these hands I tore you from the Land
Your impious presence doubly violates,
Where e'en the guiltless dare not.—^{Hence!} ~~But begone!~~
^{Begone!} ~~Hence!~~ ~~Hence!~~ Pollute our land no more! Begone!

Ant. O men of Athens! if you will not hear
My father pleading for himself, hear me,
Not for myself, but for my Father pleading,
As to a Father, by the love you bear
The Daughter by yon Altar-hearth at home,
And by the Gods we worship as yourselves.

Cho. Daughter, the Gods whom you adjure us by,
Repudiating Œdipus from Thebes,
From Athens also do repudiate.

Œd. O then of Fame that blows about the world
The praise of men and nations, what the worth
If Athens—Athens, through the world renown'd

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

For hospitable generosity—

Athens, who boasts the power as much as will

To save and succour the misfortunate—

If she that honour forfeit at your hands,

Who, from the very horror of my name,

And shapeless rumour of the terrible things

Which I have suffer'd, rather than have done,

Would thrust me from the Sanctuary forth

Of those whose law you violate no less

By broken Faith, than with unwary foot

Did I their consecrated soil transgress?

One, too, that howsoe'er you know it not,

Ev'n with the Ban that drives him from his own

Carries a Blessing with him to the Land

That shall accept him, and a Curse to those

Who, being his, henceforth shall be their foes.

(11)

All which, unto my inward eye as clear

As yonder Sun that shines in Heav'n to yours,

I shall reveal to him who governs here,

If hearing he deny me not. Meanwhile,

I do adjure you, by those Deities

Whose Sanctuary you have drawn me from,

Do me no violence; remembering

That, if Benign they be, Avengers too,

As of all outraged Law, so not the less

Of violated hospitality.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Cho. We have discharged ourselves in warning you,
And to King Theseus, whom you summon'd here,
Your cause and self henceforward we commit
To deal with, and adjudge as seems him fit.

THESEUS, ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

Thes. I have been hither summoned at the call
Of one from whom, 't was said, the light of Day
Together with his Kingdom passed away;
And, knowing of one such, and one alone,
Reported in the roll of living men,
Nor uninstructed in the destiny
Which from the glory it had raised him to
Precipitated to a depth so low,
Amid the ruin of this fallen man
I know that Œdipus of Thebes is he.
I too remember when like him forlorn,
I wandered friendless in a foreign land,
And with an alien people much endured:
And, had I always been what now I am,
Yet none the less by what myself have known
Than by the records of Mankind, aware
That, howsoever great a King To-day,
No surer of To-morrow than yourself;
Therefore whatever Athens or her King
(12) Of hospitable service can supply,

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Let him demand: for much indeed it were
For Œdipus to ask and me withhold.

Œd. O Theseus, if indeed the King I was
Look through the ruin of the wretch I am,
No less doth full assurance of a King,
Although to these quencht eyes insensible,
Breathe through the generous welcome of your word,
And ere of my necessities I tell,
Assure me of the boon as yet unaskt.
For the detested story of my life,
Unaskt, you know it—whence, and what I was,
To what catastrophe reserv'd you see—
Yet not so ignominious to myself,
No, nor to Athens so unprofitable,
Will you but listen, and do that for me,
Which, howsoever strange from lips like mine,
Is sure as Fate itself, as Fate it is.

Thes. Doubt not, however strange, whether or not
To Athens profitable, if to you,
What Œdipus demands shall Theseus do.

Œd. But profitable shall it be to both,
Unless the Spokesman of Futurity
From Delphi shall have prophesied a lie:
For this unsightly remnant of a king—
Though while it breathes a burden to us both,
But when the breath is out of it, to be

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

More serviceable to you than good looks—
I do consign to you for sepulture
Under the walls that, as they shelter'd me
While living, after death will I defend.

Thes. But of the life you have to live between
This hour and that why take you no account?

Œd. No; for the life between this hour and that
In the sepulture is provided for.

Thes. All 's an easy favour at my hands,
Whether for life or death.

(18) *Œd.* Nevertheless,
May be, to promise easier than to do.

Thes. How so?

Œd. Those loving friends of mine in Thebes,
Who would not when I pray'd them, now, pre-force,
If not per-suasion, when myself would not,
Will have me back with them.

Thes. And what if Thebes,
Relenting, or repenting, Œdipus—

Œd. O, not repenting or relenting, Thebes,
But by an Oracle of Phœbus scared,

Which told them that unless they get me home,

To live what Life they leave me, and, when dead,
To lie when dead under their City walls,
Lie tomb'd outside—outside, I say—their Gates

They shall not thrive in war against the foe,

Whose walls shall overshadow what they lose.

As Thebes shall find should ever strife arise

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Between herself and Athens, if their King
Vouchsafe me that which I have ask't of him.

Thes. But Thebes and Athens, friendly powers of
old,

What quarrel should arise to make them foes?

Œd. O Son of Ægeus! to the Gods alone
Belongs immunity from Change and Death:
All else doth all controlling Time confound.
Earth waxes old: and all that from her womb
She brings to light upon her bosom dies,
And all is mutability between.
Ev'n so with Man, who never at one stay,
No less in mind than body changeable,
Likes what he likes not, loathes where once loved,
And then perchance to liking turns again.
And as with man, with Nation none the less,
If now with Thebes and Athens all look fair,
Yet Time his furrow'd track of Night and Day
Pursues, wherein some grain of Discord dropt,
Perhaps no bigger than an idle word,
That shall infect his kindly Brotherhood,
~~Yet still infect, and with its poisonous growth,~~
And
~~Well-~~ripen'd Amity to rancour turn.

As one day—for I prophesy—shall be, (14)
When my cold ashes underneath these walls
Shall drink the warm blood of my enemies—
Ev'n as they might upon this quarrel now,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Had Thebes not other foe to deal withal.

Theb. Rumour hath reach'd us of some warlike stir,
But on what quarrel—

Æd. Thebes against herself.

For those two sons of mine, who for so long
In the Egyptian fashion, as I thought,
Kept house, and did the women's work within,
Now, full adult in arrogance and pride,
Assert their sex to quarrel for the throne
From which they banish'd me: Eteocles
The younger, with the subtle Creon's aid,
Not only seizes first, but yet withholds
The sceptre from his elder brother's hand;
Who, as by sure intelligence I learn,
Hath fled to Argos, and so cunningly
Made good his cause, that King Adrastus there
Gives him his daughter's hand in marriage, and
Along with her, by way of royal dower,
A host in arms that shall reconquer Thebes,
And set my elder son upon—my Throne.

And now by Phœbus' Oracle forewarn'd

That Victory no less within my Tomb

~~That whichsoever City with its walls~~

Shall live than in what now survives of me,

~~Shadows my tomb shall have the victory,~~

And fearful now of what they wish'd before,
Lest any day should find, where they might not,
Their victim, less by years than by the load

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Of shame and woe they laid upon him, dead,
They dog my steps like vultures on the track
Of gathering battle and the sharpest scent
May even now be close upon my heels.

Cho. Whether with Argos Thebes for war prepares,
Behold a Herald, from whatever land
I know not, as a messenger of Peace
To Athens, with that Olive in his hand.

Enter HERALD from THEBES.

(15)

Her. Creon of Thebes by mine his Herald's voice
To Theseus, King of Athens, greeting sends,
Craving from him due license to confer
With Œdipus, the King of Thebes that was,
Now by report upon Athenian soil—

Œd. Oh, I forefelt his coming in the wind!—

Her. Until which license granted by the King,
With a small retinue he waits aloof.
Before advancing to the City's wall.

Thes. Your King does well; and to his courtesy
With a like greeting Athens shall reply.

Œd. Oh, let no greeting made to him impeach
What first vouchsafed to me!

Thes. Fear not for that:

The courtesy which courtesy returns

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

No less leaves Œdipus sole arbiter
To grant or to refuse what Thebes demands.

Œd. If so, this Herald need not tarry long,
Nor overtax his memory with the word
That I shall freight him with.

Thes. And yet methinks
That e'en from lips he loves not Œdipus
Might hear a word that should send up the scale
Which now so down against his Country weighs.
What once you heard, if when you heard it true,
May, by the changing Time and Circumstance
Of which you tell me, now be Truth no more.

Œd. More false than Creon Falsehood cannot be.
O Theseus, one of heart and speech yourself,
You know not what the double tongue can do.

Thes. Nay, but the tongue which you so much distrust
Will have to deal not with myself but you,
Who know the man, and how to sift the word,
As once of one more cunning than himself,
And for all other argument than word,
Myself and Athens are engaged for that.

(16) *Œd.* Be 't so—vouchsafe but to be here yourself,
As Witness and as Judge between us both,
And you shall hear the Truth from those false lips
Wrung out, which had been told you by the true,

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Had not that busy Herald interposed
His olive leaf between yourself and me.

Thes. Witness I may be, but of neither Judge
In that which but concerns yourself and Thebes.
But, whichever way the scale may turn,
Not Judgment's self save from the God's own lip,
Against your will shall move you from my side.
Meanwhile, within the City, Œdipus,
With such observance as becomes myself
With me abide this meeting.

Œd. Ill beseems
The mendicant demurring at the hand
That but too generously deals with him.
But the prophetic voice of Destiny,
That led me hither, will not let me hence,
Till he have giv'n the signal to be gone.

Thes. Be 't as you will; with these good men abide
Secure, as in my promise, which I call
The Power beside whose sacred grove we stand
To witness, as I pledge it with my hand.

Œd. Theseus, ere this the Gods whom you adjure
Themselves had sworn by Fate the fore-decreed
Requital of that generosity
Which no requital looks for; and I know
That even now, escaping through their hands,
The Blessing strives to anticipate the Deed.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Cho. But, that no evil influence thwart its way,
And to propitiate that jealous Power
Whose Sanctuary you at first profaned—
You, Œdipus, and you, whose pious hand
Leading him wrong, like expiation need—
Returning to the consecrated shade
Of one that in its inmost shadow dwells,
(17) Its dedicated Priest and Minister,
The ceremonial he enjoins obey,
First, by lustration in the sacred stream;
Then to the sacred Earth, whereunder keep
Those Three Benign ones ever on the watch,
Thrice three libations from three vessels pour—
Of honey mixt with water, but no wine:
Which when the forest-shaded Earth has supt,
Upon her bosom olive wands thrice three
Lay with a prayer within the lips suppress;
And then, with unreverting eyes to us
Returning, wait in confidence the rest.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Well, stranger, to these rural seats
Thou comest, this region's blest retreats,
Where white Colonus lifts his head,
And glories in the bounding steed.

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ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Where sadly sweet the frequent nightingale
Impassion'd pours her evening song,
And charms with varied notes each verdant vale
The ivy's dark-green boughs among;
Or shelter'd 'midst the cluster'd vine,
Which high above, to form a bow'r
Safe from the sun or stormy show'r,
Loves its thick branches to entwine;
Where frolic Bacchus always roves,
And visits with his fost'ring Nymphs the groves.

Antistrophe 1.

Bath'd in the dew of heav'n each morn
Fresh is the fair Narcissus born,
Of these great pow'rs the crown of old:
The Crocus glitters robed in gold.
Here restless fountains ever murm'ring glide, (18)
And as their crisped streamlets stray
To feed, Cephissus, thy unfailing tide,
Fresh verdure marks their winding way;
And as their pure streams roll along
O'er the rich bosom of the ground,
Quick spring the plants, the flow'rs around.
Here oft to raise the tuneful song
The virgin band of Muses deigns;
And car-borne Venus guides her golden reins.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Strophe 2.

What nor rich Asia's wide domain,
Nor all that sea-encircled land
From Doric Pelops named, contain,
Here, unrequir'd the cult'ring hand,
The hallow'd plant spontaneous grows,
Striking cold terror through our foes.
Here blooms, this favour'd region round,
The fertile Olive's hoary head;
The young, the old behold it spread,
Nor dare with impious hand to wound:
For Morian Jove with guardian care
Delights to see it flourish fair;
And Pallas, fav'ring, from the skies
Rolls the blue lustre of her eyes.

Antistrophe 2.

My voice yet once more let me raise,
Yet other glories to relate:
A potent god for these we praise,
His presents to this favour'd state;
The Steed obedient to the rein,
And safe to plough the subject main.
Our highest vaunt is this, thy grace,
Saturnian Neptune, we behold
The ruling curb emboss'd with gold

(19)

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Control the courser's manag'd pace.
Though loud, O King, thy billows roar,
Our strong hands grasp the well-form'd oar;
And while the Nereids round it play,
Light cuts our bounding bark its way.

THESEUS, ŒDIPUS, CREON, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

Thes. Son of Menœceus, of the realm of Thebes,
A Ruler, and its Representative;
Your peaceful advent by your Herald's voice
Duly proclaim'd as much from me demands
Of courteous welcome and acknowledgment.
The purport of your mission to this Land
Yourself have told me, as foretold by him,
Who, till to-day a stranger like yourself,
And by no Herald like yourself announced,
Yet once a King, is still a King to me.
And at his bidding am I present now,
Not as a Judge between you to decide
A question that concerns yourselves alone,
But to hear that which, though he needs it not,
Should justify that honour at my hands
Which his ill Fate has forfeited in Thebes;
And as a King in Athens to remain,
If by persuasion or just argument

[99].

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

You fail to move him ev'n to reign with you.

Cre. O Theseus, Son of Ægeus, and still more
Than Ægeus' self about the world proclaim'd,
(20) Slayer of the fiery-breathing Minotaur,
And hordes of men than one such monster worse:
The Monarch of a State, if any in Greece,
In men and means abounding, of the Gods
Observant, and of Justice to Mankind,
With your world-famous Areopagus,
No less for Wisdom than for Arms renown'd,
Like Her whose tutelary name you boast.
On what a peaceful mission I am come,
My Herald first, and the small retinue
That follows me, sufficiently declare:
To trespass not on foreign Land or Law—
No, nor on him who, having found his way,
Hath found a home on this Athenian soil;
But whom, with what fair argument I may
Of Kindred and of Country, I would fain,
However royally entreated here,
^{Persuade}
~~Entreat~~ with me back to his home again.

Cho. You know the man, though, haply, not the man
He was, whom now you are to deal withal.

Cre. Therefore to him will I address myself,
In words as few and unrhetical
As simple Truth needs to be clothed withal

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

In summoning a momentous question up:
Praying the Goddess underneath whose shade
We here are standing to direct them home.
O Œdipus! my Brother—once my King—
And King once more to be, will you but hear
What for myself, and with me Thebes, I speak;
Sore wearied both under this long divorce
From one that once the Saviour was of all,
Under a judgment which your evil Fate
Prepared, yourself invoked on your own head,
And Thebes must execute if Thebes would live.
But as no judgment wrought by human hand,
And most to him that suffers from the blow,
But of the shaking hand that dealt it tells—
What of misdeed, or of misfortune what,
Suffer'd or done—unwittingly by you
Done, and by Thebes unwillingly redress'd—
Behold at last, by Fate's accomplishment,
The Oracles of Phœbus justified,
The Gods by expiation of the Curse
Appeased, and Thebes once more herself again,
Like one recover'd from a mortal throe,
And fain to fold him to her heart once more
Who saved her once, and yet a second time
Who sacrificed himself that she might live;
Your Country reaches out beseeching arms,

(81)

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Land over land, until she finds you here,
 Among a People, with a King alike
 In hospitality renown'd as arms,
 But, welcome and entreat you as they may,
 Who cannot be to you, nor you to them,
 As Œdipus to Thebes, or Thebes to him.
 Wherefore I do beseech you, Œdipus,
 By all the ties that man to man endear
 Of kindred and of country; by all those
 That King to People bind, as them to him:
 Yea, by the God, who, for a secret end
 That Man not fathoms, having parted them,
 Now, reconciled himself, would reconcile;
 Be all that erring Man on either side
 Hath done amiss forgotten as forgiv'n,
 And Œdipus and Thebes as one again.
 Look! I, ^{more burden'd than} ~~your Brother, like~~ yourself ^{by} ~~in~~ years,
 And, little as you think it, like yourself
^{Bow'd down with execution of the Doom}
~~Worn out with necessary execution~~
^{Whereunder you now labour}
~~Of what you had to suffer~~ self-condemn'd;
 With long and weary travel have I come,
 Half fearful of less prosperous return,
 Imploring you, if I cannot persuade
 With argument that shall commend itself
 If not to you, to those you trust in here,
 (22) Yet in the eyes of Athens shame me not

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

By sending empty-handed back to Thebes.

Cho. The Man has spoken: and to us it seems
In well-consider'd word, King Œdipus,
And temper that invites a like reply.

Œd. Temper and word so well consider'd, friends,
That, unaccustom'd as I long have been
To civil greeting till I lighted here,
And haply not the man I was to guess
The well-consider'd word—But thus it runs:
That, satisfied at length with all the shame
And beggary ^{Thebes} ~~she~~ condemned and left me to,
To expiate the crime—

Cre. I said not that—

Œd. On which just Judgment done—though, by
the way,
Granting the Judgment just, I yet might ask
If you, my kinsman, and those sons of mine,
Must needs become its executioner?

Cre. To Greece too I appeal if you yourself
On your own head drew not the Judgment down
Which Fate decreed and Phœbus prophesied,
And upon which the People's Being hung;
And which who but the People's Magistrate,
Kinsman or other, needs must execute?

Œd. By setting on the rabble pack of Thebes
To yelp me through the gates? But let that pass:

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

For now the rabble pack, to make amends,
Send those who set them on to hunt me back.

Cre. If you will have it so, so must it be:
So but to good result on either side.

Œd. Yet somewhat late amends on yours, I think,
Whether by People or by Magistrate:
Who, when the Plague by ceasing long ago
Proved Expiation duly made by me,
And I myself, worn with the load of shame
I bore about with me among strange men,
Cried out to lay my weary burden down—
(28) Were 't with my life—among mine own once more,—
Then would you not to my entreaty grant
What, unbesought, you come entreating now.

Cre. The People, panic-stricken with the storm
That, having made such havoc in their ranks,
Had scarcely pass'd, still dreaded its return.

Œd. And prithee, Creon, how recomforted,
And to my presence reconciled at last?

Cre. The Magistrates whom you so much distrust,
Adding the voice of their authority
To theirs who by their sacred ministry
The will of Heaven divine—

Œd. Teiresias still!
Whose refluent years against the base itself
Of Delphi breaking shiver out of sight?

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Aye, he it was who with its breath surcharg'd,
First trumpeted me forth; and now perhaps,
When other Augury and Omen fail'd
People and Magistrate to reassure,
~~To reassure People and Magistrate,~~
By some new summons from the Delphian shrine,
Hath quicken'd Thebes to reconciliation
By something stronger than regretful Love.

Cre. What mean you, Œdipus?

Œd.

No more but this;

That, as I wander'd—not so long ago—
About the world begging my daily bread,
A little wind from Delphi wandering too
Came up with me, and whisper'd in my ears
That, unless Thebes should have me back again,
She should not thrive in arms against the foe
That even then was knocking at her doors.

Cre. I scarcely thought the selfsame Œdipus,
Who scarce would heed Apollo's Prophet once,
Should for a Prophet's take the wandering voice
Of rumour in the wind.

Œd.

And, did I not,

As, spite of taunt, now better taught, I do,
The pious Creon never fail'd in faith,
'And by his presence here and now attests
That wandering voice from Delphi told me true:
'And somewhat more. For, to be plain with you,

(24)

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Another wind, that not from Delphi blew,
But somehow slipping through your city gates,
Whisper'd how Thebes, of that same Oracle
From Delphi self-assured, but not the less,
Despite of Augur and of Soothsayer,
Still apprehensive of my presence there,
Would have me back—would have me back indeed,
Not while I lived to fold me to her heart
With those beseeching arms you tell me of,
But at arm's length—outside the city walls—
Like some infectious leper there to bide
Till Death, which surely could not come too fast,
And might perchance be quicken'd if too slow,
Even in death dishonoured as in life,
Should safely hide me in the ground below.

Cre. What! has some traitor been deluding you
With some swol'n rumour of the market-place?

Œd. Traitor to you, as true to me, but not
To you more traitor than to you yourself,
If as I think, who cannot see your face—
I thank the Gods I cannot—but those here
Shall witness where the startled countenance
Convicts the false denial of the tongue.

Cre. Ev'n were that babbling traitor's word as true
As he is false, I ^{see}~~find~~ not Œdipus
Much otherwise among his new friends here,

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Than among those he counts for foes at home.

Œd. You see not, for you know not how ere long—
How soon I know not, but not long, I know—
What others here now witness, standing round,
And some you see not watching underground,
Why from this spot, by which I first set foot,
I would not—no, not to be seated by
King Theseus' side in his Acropolis,
I would not move until I went to die. (25)

Whether or not you guess my mystery,
Enough! you see I have unravell'd yours.
Begone! You lose but time and tongue—Begone!
And tell your people this on your return:

That, were the word from Delphi, and the word
From Thebes as false as you pretend it—yea,
False as yourself—I would not back with you;

not were all the Dragon brood of Thebes,
~~No—were with all her population Thebes,~~
armed
From the first harvest of the ~~Dragon's~~ teeth
That ancient Cadmus sowed the field withal
to join the living host
Rais'd from the dust ~~that first he raised them from,~~

Who yell'd me forth—all these and all the way

grovelling
From Thebes to Athens ~~fleeing~~ at your heels,
Back would I not with you—
~~I would not back with them,~~ no, not to reign

Enthroned among them as I was before,
Much less a tainted leper like to lie
Outside your walls while living, and, when dead,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

There huddled under as a thing accursed,
Save for the Victory that within me lies,
And shall but quicken as the body dies.
No; the same answer that I make to you,
Take home with you to all: on this same spot
Of earth, which now I stand a beggar on,
Beside this consecrated Grove, in which
By no delusive Inspiration drawn
~~Unconsecrated but predestin'd foot~~
I first set foot—I say, my Throne is here,
Deep-based as Hades, fix'd as Fate itself;
And this poor staff I long have lean'd upon
The Sceptre, wherewith from the world beneath
I shall direct the issues of the war
That shall determine wingéd Victory
To ^{settle on} ~~rest upon~~ the Land where tomb'd I lie.

Cre. Theseus, in vain to reason with a man,
Still more the slave that evermore he was
Of Passion which inveterates with years;
Suspecting even those who mean him well,
As once myself; and when, to his own cost,
(26) Falsely he found, as with such men it fares,
He first injustice justifies by worse.
Therefore to you, King Theseus, and to these
Grave Councillors of Athens, I appeal:
And, irrespective of the ties that bind
All men to kith and country, but which he,

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Despite all living offer on their side,
Irreconcilably repudiates—ask,
If that same Oracle which he pretends
By some vague rumour reach'd his ears say true,
And that victorious power, as he pretends,
Be lodg'd in him, whether alive or dead—
Is he not bound, reluctant though he be,
With his returning presence to requite
The deadly mischief which it wrought before?—
A Pestilence so terrible to Thebes
As almost to extermination thinn'd
Her people, and yet leaves but half arrayed
Against the foe now knocking at her doors.
For such a foe we have to deal ^{withal} ~~with now~~—
Adrastus, King of Argos, who, by this
Man's son, and by his own ambition, led,
Has, with some several powers allied with him,
Raised such a Force as threatens to destroy
What little life the Father left in Thebes,
And either to reconquer and there reign,
Or raze our sacred ramparts to the dust.
And on that second count I ask again—
Whether, if that wing'd Victory do indeed
Abide with him, he be not doubly bound,
By now submission to his country's will
To counter-expiate his son's revolt,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

While for past wrong atoning for himself?
And furthermore I ask, would it beseem
A King and People wise and just as this,
If not with Thebes confederate, not her Foe,
(27) Who, disregarding as I know you do,
All visionary profit for yourselves,
Would not escape that censure in men's eyes,
Withholding—nay, before those jealous eyes
Upholding—one who, for his sake—still more
For hers who innocently shares the shame—
Were better in the bosom of his own
To veil ^{the remnant of a life defaced} ~~a life defaced~~ ~~if not by crime,~~
^{If not by Crime—yet by calamity} ~~By that~~ so crime-like—so terrible—twofold—
Of Parricide and—

Œd. Shameless villain, hold!
Who in the compass of this brief appeal
Before these reverend Elders and their King,
Dare show the double face and double tongue
For which of old you were notorious:
First with fair honey-sweet cajoling words
Seeking to entice; and, when the honey fail'd,
Intimidating with ^{unsheathed} ~~a threatened~~ sting,
As impotent to wound as that to win.
Intimidate, I say—not me alone,
But this great People and their Sovereign,
Who dare, forsooth, who dare between us stand

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

With talk—O not of Crime forsooth—but of
Calamity so crime-like—'t was the word—
So cunningly confused, that when at first
You came, propitiation on your tongue,
The word of pity floated on the top,
But when that fail'd, then Crime came uppermost,
And Crime left ringing in this people's ears.
Lest which ^{albeit but empty breath, I know, sound} ~~not to my shame I know indeed~~
^{To} ~~With~~ good King Theseus, and his Councillors,
But with the Citizens, less well advised,
Ring out the old alarm that shall again—
And let it!—rouse the cry of baffled Thebes,
I will arrest, and from denial false,
Or the less guilty silence of consent,
Convict you once for all, and let you go.
Was 't not predicted ev'n before my birth,
By Phœbus, Fate's unerring Oracle,
That I should slay my father? And the God
Provided for his own accomplishment,
Ev'n by the very means that father took
To wrench out of my hands his destiny,
As old Kithæron wots of to this hour.
For Fate, that was not to be baffled thus,
And Phœbus, that was not to be forsworn,
There found and rear'd me till my arm was strong
To do the execution they fore-doom'd.

(28)

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Yea, on the very road King Laius
Again was going to that Oracle
He fondly dream'd—as afterward his son
More vainly bragg'd—of having foil'd before,
I met—I smote—I slew—my Father—yes—
And you, before this presence, answer me!
If one you knew not save that King he were,
Upon the public thoroughfare of men
Had struck you, no less royal than himself;
Would you, sedate and pious as you are,
In youth and courage strong as I was then—
Would you have paused to think whether, in all
The roll of human possibility
The man who smote you might not in his veins
Have running blood akin to that in yours,
Or, in the sudden wrath of self-defence,
Retaliated with a counter-blow?
Yea! as the very Father whom I slew,
Could his voice reach us through the earth between,
Would ev'n now bear me witness, as he shall
When I rejoin him in the world below;
That, howsoever for the world's behoof,
The Gods, albeit with pitying eyes from heaven,
Chastise the guiltless instruments of crime
For which they knew that Fate is chargeable,
They look not with a like compassion down

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Upon those mortal agents of their doom
Who, with a vengeance more implacable, (29)
Pursue and persecute—aye, let it be
The Parricide!—The Parricide!—
And for that yet more terrible mischance
That follow'd—and for which yourselves in Thebes
Were, under Destiny, responsible—
All shameless as ^{thou art,} ~~you are~~, art not ashamed
Before an alien People and their King
To breathe ^{—as breathe thou wert about to do} ~~of that, which, Crime or not, thyself~~
~~Had I not swept it from thy lips unsaid~~
~~And one and one more dear involves in that~~
The Word which not myself alone involves,
But one—whose Memory *Thou* least of all
Shouldst have untomb'd—involves, I say, in that
Which unaware to have done is less shame
Than with aforethought malice to proclaim!

Cho. If to King Creon Reason heretofore
Seem'd choked in Passion, not to wonder now
That, with this burst of Fury overwhelm'd,
He leaves in silence Theseus to reply.

Thes. Albeit on either side appeal'd to now,
And whichsoever way myself inclined,
I shall not from my former purpose swerve;
To stand as Witness, not as Arbiter,
Between two Princes of an alien land,
Whereof one yet is Ruler, and though fall'n
From rule the other, still a King to me.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

To whom, first coming to the land I rule,
I pledg'd an oath by those Eumenides
Beside whose sanctuary e'en now we stand,
That if Persuasion and fair Argument
Should fail with him,—as fail'd it has, you see,
Nor less with her, who, wedded to his fate,
Clings all the closer to her father's side—
No power but Heav'n's should move him from my land.
And therefore, heedless what the world may say,
Well knowing that my hospitality
To no remoter self-advantage looks,
I should not—even if not engaged by oath—
I should not from my plighted promise swerve.

Cre. I may not, were I minded—I, with these
(30) Few followers—in the teeth of Athens arm'd,
Arraign the adverse judgment of their King;
But to the courteous welcome I have met,
Reciprocating with a like farewell,
Must to my people leave on my return
How minded, and how temper'd, to receive
This unforeseen denial of their right.

Theb. That you shall settle with your friends at
home;
And in what temper and to what result
Among yourselves decided and declared,
Thebes shall not find our Athens unprepared.

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

CHORUS.

Strophe 1.

Were I where the dauntless train
Swells the battle's brazen roar;
On the hollow'd Pythian plain;
Or the torch-illumin'd shore,
Where for men their holy flame
O'er the sacred Mysteries wakes,
And 'mongst Priests of honour'd name
Where his station Silence takes,
Wont his golden key to bear
In his firm tongue-locking hand!
There the warrior Theseus, there
Join'd the virgin sisters stand;
There they shall soon the conflict share,
And pour the torrent rage of war.

Antistrophe 1.

Westward haply on the plain,
Where the white and rocky steep
Tow'rs o'er Oia's rich domain,
May th' ensanguin'd battle sweep:
Where impetuous in their speed,
Glowing with the flames of war,
Warriors spur the foaming steed,

(31)

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Other warriors roll the car.
Brave the youths who here reside,
Brave th' Athenian troops in fight;
Shine their reins with martial pride,
All their trappings glitter bright;
These honours in their rich array
To Pallas all and Neptune pay.

Strophe 2.

Is the dreadful work begun?
Or does aught their force delay?
O let me give the glad presages way!
Soon shall yon bright ethereal sun
Behold him, vaunting now no more,
Compell'd th' afflicted virgin to restore,
Afflicted through her father's woes.
Each day some deed effected shows,
The ruling hand of righteous Jove.
I am the prophet of a prosperous fight.
Had I the pennons of a dove
High o'er the clouds to whirl my flight,
Then should my raptur'd eyes behold
The victory my thoughts foretold.

Antistrophe 2.

Thou in heav'n's high throne adored,
Sovereign of the gods above,

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Give strength, O pow'rful all-beholding Jove,
Give conquest to my country's lord;
With glory mark his purple way,
And make the ambush'd foe an easy prey!
Pallas, propitious hear my pray'r, (32)
And show that Athens is thy care!
Thee, Hunter Phœbus, skill'd to trace
The sylvan savage in his rapid flight;
Thee, whom the pleasures in the chase
Of the fleet, spotted hind delight,
Thee I implore, chaste Huntress Maid,
Aid her brave sons, our country aid!

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Mes. Where is King Œdipus?

Cho. Behold him here.

Mes. King Œdipus, Theseus, of Athens King,
Hath sent me back with this report full speed:
That Creon with a cloud of armèd men
Whom we found ambush'd on a neighbouring height,
Without encounter, but with lowering brows,
And muttered thunder of Revenge to come,
Broke up and blew away the way they came.

Œd. The Gods be praised, and Theseus blest withal!

Mes. Who bids me tell you further what myself
Did also witness; that, as we returned,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Before Poseidon's Altar by the way,
Whereat we stay'd to sacrifice and pray,
A strange man, as with distant travel worn,
And low beneath a load of sorrow bow'd,
By that same Altar they both worshipped at
Besought a boon of Theseus; and, when askt
His country, name, and parentage, replied,
From Argos—

Æd. Argos!

Mes. But himself, he said,

(33) The Son of Ædipus, once King of Thebes,
Whom, ere he went to conquer and retrieve
By arms the throne usurped from both in Thebes,
With many tears King Theseus he besought
To see, perchance before he went to die:
And Theseus, moved by pity for the man,
And reverence for the shrine by which he pray'd—

Æd. I will not see him!

Cho. Nay, consider yet;

As by the sacred earth you stand beside
From Theseus welcome for yourself you found,
So by the shrine at which with Theseus pray'd
Your son, refuse not what to Creon granted
Of hearing and reply.

Mes. So pray'd the King.

Ant. Oh, Father, young and maiden as I am,

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Unfit to lift my voice among these men,
Yet hear me—if not for my brother's sake,
May be less guilty than you now believe,
Or if yet guilty, not impenitent,
Who comes to plead forgiveness at your feet—
If not for his sake, Father, yet for mine—
Let me but see my brother's face once more,
And hear his voice, before he goes to die.

~~Cho. The Maid says well; and for herself, and him
She pleads for: nay, King Œdipus, for you,
From whose compliance harm cannot perchance
Some unexpected profit may ensue.~~

Œd. You know not what you ask, Antigone;
But thus by Theseus at the altar's side
Entreated, let what has to be done,
And leave me to such peace as may be mine.

Cho. And yonder, lo! the solitary man
Comes slowly weeping hither.

Ant. Oh, my brother!

Cho. Approach, unhappy man, approach, and plead
Your sorrows, and, as you deserve, succeed.

POLYNICES, ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS. (84)

Pol. Appeal! Alas, how scarcely dare approach,
Who scarce aloof dare contemplate through tears
That Vision of paternal majesty,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Or his misfortune like my own deplore!
Beholding him an outcast like myself,
In sorry raiment—travel-torn as mine—
With that bow'd head, those tangled locks that fall
O'er the benighted temple of his brows;
And her, who, like my father, loved me once,
And even now whose falling tears confess
That ev'n the eternal love she bears to him
Hath not yet quencht the Sister in her heart—
Oh, wretched, and part-guilty as I am,
Albeit the judgment on yourself you brought,
Of living worse than death that Thebes might live,
Had I but known—but heard—much more had seen,
What now I see, and know, had never been;
Never had been—much less so long endured,
And shall no longer, now I witness, be,
Despite of those who drown'd my single voice,
As now their treason has confounded me.

No word? No sign? revolted from me still?—
For, were I guilty as you guilty deem,
Yet not so guilty as Eteocles,
Who proves himself arch-criminal tow'rd you
By after treason to your elder-born,
Seizing the Throne which, if you leave, devolves
Upon your first-born second self in me.

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

This hath Eteocles, my Brother, done,
By subornation of the Citizens,
With the connivance of the subtle Creon,
Who spins his web within the City walls
To catch the Sons, their Father as he caught,
Involving us in that unnatural strife (35)
By which he purposes, when rid of one,
To rule the other; or, destroying both,
Himself in title as in deed to reign.
Thus me, who least came easy to his hand,
Hath he like you driv'n out, like you to seek
And find a country and a home elsewhere;
You, on this hospitable soil, with this
Great Sovereign and his generous People here;
Whom, without asking further service from,
Nor wishing to dissever from your side,
Unless by restoration to your own
To sweeten separation from themselves,
I do implore you, Father, were it but
With one relenting gesture of the hand,
One speechless inclination of the head,
Vouchsafe your wretched son some dawning sign
Of that forgiveness, wherewith fully arm'd,
I may for more than past misdeed atone,
By vengeance upon those who wrong us both.
For when, so foully by those two betray'd,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

I fled to Argos, King Adrastus there
Gave me not only welcome when I came,
But after, when possess'd of all my wrongs,
His daughter's hand in wedlock; and with that,
By way of dowry, such an Host of Arms,
As, with the favour of the Gods, which your
Forgiveness, oh my Father! shall secure,
Shall Thebes recover, and re-throne us both.
For look! For us seven-fold Armament
By seven such Champions headed and array'd
As yet the world has not together seen,
Leagued in our cause; Amphiaraus first,
For Divination famous as for Arms,
Knowing the issue of the War he joins;
Ætolian Tydeus next; and next to him
(36) Eteoclus of Argos; and the fourth,
Hippomedon: then Capaneus, who boasts
Of bringing down the walls of Thebes by Fire:
Parthenopæus next of Arcady,
So from his mother Atalanta named:
And seventh, and last, myself, your elder-born,
And right successor to your dynasty.
With sev'n such Champions, and with such an Host,
One need we yet to consecrate our arms
And triumph in the cause which is your own.
Wherefore, repenting what unfilial wrong,

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

By others wrought on, I have done to you,
Hither on foot from Argos am I come,
A contrite suppliant at my Father's feet;
Imploring him, by all those Household Gods
Whose ^{statues are} ~~monuments~~ before our palace door—
Yea, by the faithful men within the walls,
Who, to a statue-like inaction cow'd,
Stand mutely wondering for their absent lord—
And for her sake who, having shared so long
Your sorrow, now your triumph shall partake—
Remit your righteous wrath against a son,
Who, tow'rd you guilty as he may have been,
And all distasteful in your eyes as now,
Shall now for more than past misdeed atone,
Or, in just retribution failing, fall.

(After a long pause)

Œd. Hath this man said all he came charg'd to say?

Cho. So from the unruffled silence into which
His words have fall'n and vanisht I conceive.

Œd. But that the Sovereign Ruler of this Land
Had sent this man to me, and thought it well
That I should hear and answer, hear I might,
But not a word of answer from my lips:
No, nor a sign, save with averted face,
And one blind warning of the hand—" Begone! " (37)
But thus entreated, by the word of one

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Whose word should be the law of Love to me,
And of the friendly Council here beside,
I will not only hear, but will reply—
Such a reply that he that asks for it
Shall wish he had not come so far to hear.
Who—Wretch!—who when thou hadst the sovereign
power,
Which now thy Brother to himself usurps,
Then—not cajoled nor forced, as you pretend—
For was not I, the Victim, Witness too?—
But, one with them, didst set the rabble on
To hoot me forth to shame and beggary;
Yea, when, not like yourselves implacable,
The God allow'd and I besought return,
Still shut me out, and, but to serve your ends,
Still would have let me linger till I died
In a strange country, and in such a plight
As now, forsooth, you weep to look upon!
Thou hypocrite! with those pretended tears
Of false contrition, which, were 't true, too late,
Think'st to cajole me with a show of Love—
Aye, of such Love wherewith a man regards
The tool he needs to work his purpose with,
And forthwith fling regardlessly away,
Laying on those the load of infamy
Thou sharèdst with them of the royal spoil
They stole from me, and now, like other thieves,

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Would keep between themselves, outwitting thee,
Who, them outwitting, to thyself wouldst keep?

Oh Fool as Hypocrite! suspecting not
How that most cunning rogue of all the three
Has been before you, and the mask you wear,
But that, behind ^{it} ~~which~~ playing such a part,
In his mid passion he was forced to drop,
And, as he fled discomfited away,
Left you to wear, and to a like result.

Fools both, as Hypocrites! suspecting not (38)
That he you would deceive your errand knows,
Each to win back the stolen stakes you lost—
The Kingdom once without the King, but now
The King himself to bring the Kingdom back;
Who, flung before as offal from your walls,
Is now become a treasure of such price
As each of you would fain get home again,
Like stolen treasure—to be buried there.
You see I know your errand: if you fail
To guess my answer—

One way lies to Argos, and another Thebes,
Which those tired feet might fail to reach in time;
But could you borrow Hermes' feather'd heel
Might catch your Rival ere the Sun goes down,
And from his lip learn all. If not from him,
Then somewhat later, from your brother there,
When you shall meet him, arm to arm, in arms,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Under the wall where you would bury me.
Then might you tell him in return, were not
The story swallow'd up enacting it,
How, as he speaks, your living Father's Ghost
Foresees you both, up-looking from the tomb
In which your hopes of conquest die with him,
You, not the Champion leading, lance-erect,
Your Argive Host to sack your native Thebes;
Nor him within it in mock majesty
Posting his people to defend the Gates:
Not thus, but in your golden feathers both,
Where one another challenging you stood,
Stretch'd in the dust, slain by each other's hand.
This, standing on the consecrated ground
Of those avenging Sisters underneath
Who hear, and even as I speak prepare
To do their destined work, I prophesy;
You never to reconquer or regain
The Kingdom lost where he shall never reign;
(89) But ev'n before the walls that you contest,
Die, slaying him by whom yourself are slain!
 Cho. Terrible words from human lips to hear!
And by what witness from what other world
Attested, as methought heard once before,
While this man spoke, and heav'n and earth look'd
clear?

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Ant. Alas! Alas! for my beloved Brother!

Pol. Aye, and Alas! not for myself alone,
But for all those arm'd in my cause, Alas!
To whom returning I may not reveal
The doom of death to me, to them defeat!

Ant. O then by all you worship, and hold dear,
Return to Argos not; or, if return,
Revealing that you carry back with you,
Revolt them from your fatal Enterprise,
And, leaving graceless Thebes to go her way,
With those you loved, and you are loved by, live!

Pol. Love me they would no more, Antigone,
If, having roused them at the trumpet's sound
To arms, both Men and Champions, in my cause,
Then to dissuade them, if dissuade I could,
By rumour of uncertain Prophecies,
And Malediction that to them would seem
But empty raving of impotent wrath.
Or, ev'n would they retreat, as will they not,
Could I endure in Argos to survive
My younger brother's laughing-stock in Thebes?

Ant. Oh, better that than this unnatural war,
Which cannot end, which cannot end, I know,
But with the fatal consequence that leads
Or haunts my Father's footsteps where he goes!
While the false Creon, who has set you on,

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Shall mock you both, who die that he may win!

Pol. Too late, too late, Antigone, too late!
And when that comes which is foredoom'd, and I
Lie stark and cold before the walls of Thebes,
With him whom slaying I am doom'd to die,

(40) Shall not one pious hand, Antigone,
Protect your lifeless brother from the dog
With some handfuls of his Mother Earth?

Ant. Oh, but it shall not need! You shall not go!
If not for Love, in Pity, for us both,
My Father shall relent!

Pol. But Fate shall not.

Æd. No, by that other roll of thunder, no!

Cho. Again! Yet not a cloud in Heav'n above—

Æd. These are no thunders from the hand of Zeus,
But the dark Ruler of the World below,
Reverberating from the vault of Heav'n—
Shall some one here go straightway to your King,
And bid him, whatsoever busied with—
Yea, were it by the Altar worshipping,
Forthwith unworshipt leave it; for the God
Who links the Fate of Athens with mine own,
By those three thunders hence has summon'd me.
Gather no dust upon the feet of him
Who goes this errand: for the God, I know,
Who, brandishing aloft his Oracles
Accomplisht, in one compass of the sky

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

From my meridian drove me to my fall,
And, as himself he sank behind the Night,
Into the hands of those who therein rule
My destiny resign'd—the God, I say,
Whose rising found me here, with his descent
Shall take me down with him, and leave me there.

CHORUS.

Strange things has this day witness'd and heard tell
By the strange man whom Phœbus from the stream
Of Ocean rising with his levell'd beam
Surprised, as with a cloud of Oracle
Encompass'd, in the consecrated shade
Of those who underneath more darkly dwell,
Whose more propitious name scarce daring we (41)
To whisper, he—seemingly not unheard—
No, nor unanswer'd—calls on undismay'd.
Strange things—and if the word of presage hold,
Not unattested by those thunders three,
Yet stranger are we likely to behold,
Prophetical of Evil if to some,
To Athens, and her People and her Kings,
Auspicious all, and for all time to come.

THESEUS, ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

Thes. Look, at your bidding, Œdipus, once more
I come, prepared to do as I have done

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ÆDIPUS.

Of hospitable service all I may.

Æd. Yea, once more, Theseus, and for one last time,
Before the God recalls me to himself,
Have I recall'd you, to solicit naught
But the good service of a single day,
Which, were life longer, were, I know, life-long,
With Death's eternal blessing to repay:
Which when I prophesied as soon to be,
Not knowing then how soon; but knowing now.

Thes. By what assurance, Ædipus?

Æd. By those
Three subterranean thunders summon'd hence.

Thes. From Athens?

Æd. From the eyes of Athens, aye;
And yet nowhither else: a mystery
Whose peremptory resolution
The God who loves you but for you delays.

Thes. I must believe that one whom destiny
Hath step by step oracularly led,
Reads and interprets right the wondrous Signs
Which others but attest and wonder at.

Æd. And for a further witness and a last—
Blind as I am, and hitherto so long
(42) Compell'd to find my way with others' eyes,
Myself shall those who led me forthwith lead
Along the road where that shall have to be

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Which other eyes than Theseus' none may see.
Which having seen, King Theseus, in your heart
Keep unreveal'd; and when you come to die,
To him alone who after you the Throne
Of Athens mounts reveal it; he in turn
To him who him shall follow; and so forth,
From hand to hand, until the end of Time:
Not trusting that into the People's hand,
Who, loyal, wise, and pious, let them be,
Seducible by those seditious few
That still infest the soundest Commonweal,
Abuse the power committed to their hands,
And by disorder and revolt at home
Lay bare your bosom to the foe without
~~Become of foreign enemies the prey.~~
And now the Powers to you and yours Benign,
Who thrice have call'd me from the world below,
Now that the word of vantage in your heart
Is register'd, will brook no more delay,
And the mute Hermes of the lower world,
Ev'n as I speak, prepares to lead the way.

CHORUS.

Strophe.

If I may thee, infernal Queen,
Thou gloomy pow'r by mortal eyes unseen,
With holy awe revere;

[181]

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

And thee, stern Monarch, whose terrific sway

The dreary realms of night obey,

Hear Pluto, Pluto hear!

Let not pangs of tort'ring pow'r

Rack the stranger's dying hour,

While the cheerless path he treads

To the Stygian house that leads.—

Guiltless thou wast doom'd to know

(48) Various ills and bitter woe:

May the god with just regard

Grace thee with a bright reward!

Antistrophe.

Ye awful pow'rs, from realms of night

Who vengeful rise the guilty to affright!

And thou, grim Dog of Hell,

Before the iron gates of Pluto spread

Enormous on thy horrid bed,

With many a hideous yell

Whilst thy echoing cave resounds,

Guarding fierce those dismal bounds;

Thou, whom Earth to Tartarus bore,

Cease, oh cease thy dreaded roar;

Gentle meet him in those glades;

When he joins the silent shades;

Ever wakeful, cease t' appal;

Dog of Hell, on thee I call!

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

Mes. O Citizens of Athens, to sum up
In fewest words what, to be told at large,
Would need an apter tongue than mine to tell—
King Œdipus—

Cho. Is dead—

Mes. I say not that;
From human eyes departed, I will say;
And with such circumstance as, could I tell
All that myself I saw, who saw not all—

Cho. But, if not all, yet what you saw, recount.

Mes. How the blind King, by that interior light
Guided himself we know not, guided us,
You that were present witness for yourselves;
And how with Theseus and the woeful Maid
Beside him, and some wondering few behind, (44)
Straightforward, with unhesitating step,
That needed not his staff to feel the way,
Led on; till, reacht the threshold of the road
Which leads, they say, down to the nether world,
Beside the monumental stone that marks
Where our King Theseus and Peirithous,
After long warfare, plighted hands of peace,
He stopp'd, sat down, his tatter'd raiment loos'd,
And bade his daughter from the running brook
Bring him wherewith himself to purify.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

Which she, resorting to the nearest field
Of Ceres, with what decent haste she might,
Return'd, and wash'd him, and in raiment clean
Reclothed, as to the rite of Burial due.
And when all this was done, as for the Dead,
Weeping himself, he folded in his arms
His weeping child, and told her, from that hour,
She that so long had suffer'd for his sake,
With but the love between them to requite,
The face of him she loved must see no more.
And so they wept together for a while,
Together folded in each other's arms,
And all was silent else; when suddenly,
A thunder-speaking voice, as from the jaws
Of earth that yawn'd beneath us, call'd aloud:
"HO! THOU THERE! WHY SO LONG A-COMING? COME!"
Then Œdipus, who knew the word, and whence,
Relax'd his folding arms, and, rising up,
Took Theseus' hand, and, in it laying hers,
Besought him never to desert the child,
Nor yield her up to any against her will,
But be to her the Father whom she lost.
To which King Theseus having pledged his word,
The other, folding in one last embrace,
With one last kiss, his daughter to his heart,
Bade her return with us and never once

ŒDIPUS AT ATHENS.

Look back on what was not for any one (45)
But for King Theseus and himself to know.
Which said, and all in awful wonder hush'd,
The weeping Daughter turn'd away with us,
Slowly, like those who leave a funeral pyre,
With us our way re-tracing; until I,
Seiz'd with a longing I could not control,
Despite the word yet ringing in my ears,
Look'd back—and saw King Theseus standing there,
Stock-still, his hands before his eyes like one
~~As 't were a man smit with a sudden blaze,~~
Smit with a sudden blaze:
~~His hand covering his eyes; but Œdipus,~~
There—anywhere—there was not—vanisht—gone—
But, whether by some flash from Heav'n despatcht,
Or by His hand who through the shatter'd Earth
Had summon'd him in thunder, drawn below,
No living man but Theseus' self may know.

CHORUS.*

Let not the Man by Man be deem'd unblest,
Who, howsoever in the midnight gloom
Encompass'd of inexorable Doom
That shrouds him from his Zenith to the West,
Not till he sink below the Verge redeems

* [These stanzas appear first in the posthumous edition.]

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING ŒDIPUS.

His unexpected Lustre in such beams
As reaching Heav'n-aloft enshrine his Tomb.

(or as follows)

Strange Destinies of Man! But in the range
Of Destiny recorded none more strange
Than his, who, from his Sovereign Glory hurl'd
Among strange men a Spectacle became
Of Horror and Reproach about the World:

Till by the * hand
That drove him forth and forward to the land
Of sacred Athens led, he did repay
The hospitable Welcome of one day
With such Farewell of Welfare as on those
Who serve him some departing God bestows,
His tutelary care bequeathing—yea,
Himself bequeathing albeit pass'd away.

Nor let the Man by Man be deem'd unblest
Who, howsoever in the midnight gloom
Eclipsed of some inexorable Doom
That shrouds him from his Zenith to the West,
Not till he sinks below the Earth redeems
His unextinguish'd lustre in such beams
As rising Zenith-high enshrine his Tomb.

* Left blank in MS.

**EXTRACTS FROM FITZGERALD'S LET-
TERS RELATING TO "THE BIRD-
PARLIAMENT."**

To E. B. Cowell.

31. Gt. Portland St., London.

Jan. 22, '57.

. . . But my great Performace all lies in the last five weeks since I have been alone here; when I wrote to Napoleon Newton to ask him to lend me his MS. of Attár's Mantic uttair; and, with the help of Garcin de Tassy have nearly made out about two-thirds of it. For it has greatly interested me, though I confess it is always an old Story. . . . Attár's doctrine seems to me only Jámí and Jeláledín (of whom I have poked out a little from the MS. you bought for me), but his Mantic has, like Salámán, the advantage of having a Story to hang all upon; and some of his illustrative Stories are very agreeable: better than any of the others I have seen. He has not so much Fancy or Imagination as Jámí, nor, I dare say, so much depth as Jeláledín; but his touch is lighter. I mean to make a Poetic Abstract of the Mantic, I think.

To E. B. Cowell.

24 Portland Terrace, Regent's Park.

March 12 [1857].

. . . Meanwhile also I keep putting into Shape some of that Mantic which however would never do to pub-

EXTRACTS FROM FITZGERALD'S LETTERS

lish. For this reason; that anything like a literal Translation would be, I think, unreadable; and what I have done for amusement is not only so unliteral, but I doubt unoriental, in its form and expression, as would destroy the value of the Original without replacing it with anything worth reading of my own. It has amused me however to reduce the Mass into something of an Artistic Shape.

To E. B. Cowell.

24 Portland Terrace, Regent's Park.

March 20 [1857].

. . . To-day I have been writing twenty pages of a metrical Sketch of the Mantic, for such uses as I told you of. It is an amusement to me to take what Liberties I like with these Persians, who (as I think) are not Poets enough to frighten one from such excursions, and who really do want a little Art to Shape them.

To E. B. Cowell.

12 Marine Terrace, Lowestoft.

Dec. 28 [1867].

. . . Here, at Lowestoft, in this same row of houses, two doors off, I was writing out the Translation I made in the Winter of 1859. I have scarce looked at Original or Translation since. But I was struck by this; that eight years had made little or no alteration in my idea of the matter: it seemed to me that I really had brought in nearly all worth remembering, and had really condensed the

RELATING TO THE "BIRD-PARLIAMENT."

whole into a much compacter Image than the original. This is what I think I can do with such discursive things: such as all the Oriental things I have seen are. I remember you thought that I had lost the Apologues towards the close; but I believe I was right in excluding them, as the narrative grew dramatic and neared the Catastrophe. Also, it is much better to glance at the dangers of the Valley when the Birds are in it, than to let the Leader recount them before: which is not good policy, morally or dramatically.

**A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW
OF
FARÍD-UDDÍN ATTAR'S
BIRD-PARLIAMENT.**

[Mr. W. Aldis Wright prefixes the following note to the "Bird-Parliament," saying: "I am indebted to the kindness of Professor Cowell for the following account of this translation."]

FitzGerald was first interested in 'Attar's Mantik-ut-tair' by the extracts given in De Sacy's notes to his edition of that poet's Pandnâmah, and in 1856 began to read the original MS. lent to him by Mr. Newton of Hertford. In 1857 Garcin de Tassy published his edition of the Persian text, of which he had previously given an analysis in his "La poésie philosophique et religieuse chez les Persans"; and FitzGerald at once threw himself into the study of it with all his characteristic enthusiasm. De Tassy subsequently published in 1863 a French prose translation of the poem; but the previous analysis was, I believe, FitzGerald's only help in mastering the difficulties of the original. He often wrote to me in India, describing the pleasure he found in his new discovery, and he used to mention how the more striking apologues were gradually shaping themselves into verse, as he thought them over in his lonely walks. At last, in 1862, he sent me the following translation, intending at first to offer it for publication in the Journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society; but he soon felt that it was too free a version for the pages of a scientific journal. He then talked of publishing it by itself, but the project never assumed a definite shape, though I often urged him to print the 'Bird-Parliament' as a sequel to the 'Salâmân.'

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

ONCE on a time from all the Circles seven
Between the stedfast Earth and rolling Heaven
THE BIRDS, of all Note, Plumage, and Degree,
That float in Air, and roost upon the Tree;
And they that from the Waters snatch their Meat,
And they that scour the Desert with long Feet:
Birds of all Natures, known or not to Man,
Flock'd from all Quarters into full Divan,
On no less solemn business than to find
Or choose, a Sultan Khalif of their kind,
For whom, if never theirs, or lost, they pined. }
The Snake had his, 't was said; and so the Beast
His Lion-lord: and Man had his, at least:
And that the Birds, who nearest were the Skies,
And went apparell'd in its Angel Dyes,
Should be without—under no better Law
Than that which lost all other in the Maw—
Disperst without a Bond of Union—nay,
Or meeting to make each the other's Prey—
This was the Grievance—this the solemn Thing
On which the scatter'd Commonwealth of Wing,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

From all the four Winds, flying like to Cloud
That met and blacken'd Heav'n, and Thunder-loud
With Sound of whirring Wings and Beaks that clash'd
Down like a Torrent on the Desert dash'd:
Till by Degrees, the Hubbub and Pell-mell
Into some Order and Precedence fell,
And, Proclamation made of Silence, each
In special Accent, but in general Speech
That all should understand, as seem'd him best,
The Congregation of all Wings address.

And first, with Heart so full as from his Eyes
Ran weeping, up rose Tajidár¹ the Wise;
The mystic Mark upon whose Bosom show'd
That He alone of all the Birds THE ROAD
Had travell'd: and the Crown upon his Head
Had reach'd the Goal; and He stood forth and said.

“ Oh Birds, by what Authority divine
I speak you know by *His* authentic Sign,
And Name, emblazon'd on my Breast and Bill:
Whose Counsel I assist at, and fulfil:
At His Behest I measured as he plann'd
The Spaces of the Air and Sea and Land;
I gauged the secret sources of the Springs

¹ *Tájidár*—“Crown-wearer”—one Epithet of the “Hudhud,” a beautiful kind of Lapwing, Niebuhr says, frequenting the Shores of the Persian Gulf, and supposed to have the Gift of Speech, &c.

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

From Cloud to Fish¹: the Shadow of my Wings
Dream'd over sleeping Deluge: piloted
The Blast² that bore Sulayman's Throne: and led
The Cloud of Birds that canopied his Head;
Whose Word I brought to Balkís³: and I shared
The Counsel that with Ásaf he prepared.
And now *you* want a Khalif: and I know
Him, and his whereabouts, and How to go:
And go alone I could, and plead your cause
Alone for all: but, by the eternal laws,
Yourselves by Toil and Travel of your own
Must for your old Delinquency atone.
Were you indeed not blinded by the Curse
Of Self-exile, that still grows worse and worse,
Yourselves would know that, though *you* see him not,
He *is* with you this Moment, on this Spot,
Your Lord through all Forgetfulness and Crime,
Here, There, and Everywhere, and through all Time.
But as a Father, whom some wayward Child
By sinful Self-will has unreconciled,

¹ *From Máh, the Moon, to Máhi, the Fish, on which the World was fabled to repose. As Attar says in the Introduction: "God has placed the Earth on the back of the Bull: and the Bull on the Fish; but the Fish on what? On Nothing; but nothing comes of Nothing, and therefore all this is Nothing," or, as the Sufi expounds himself in the Poem, all the visible and material Universe merges into an Abstract Essence of Deity.*

² *The East Wind.*

³ *Balkís is Queen of Sheba; Ásaf, Solomon's Vizier.*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Waits till the sullen Reprobate at cost
Of long Repentance should regain the Lost;
Therefore, yourselves to see as you are seen,
Yourselves must bridge the Gulf you made between
By such a Search and Travel to be gone
Up to the mighty mountain Káf, whereon
Hinges the World, and round about whose Knees,
Into one Ocean mingle the Sev'n Seas;
In whose impenetrable Forest-folds
Of Light and Dark "Symurgh"¹ his Presence holds;
Not to be reach'd, if to be reach'd at all
But by a Road the stoutest might appal;
Of Travel, not of Days or Months, but Years—
Life-long perhaps: of Dangers, Doubts, and Fears
As yet unheard of: Sweat of Blood and Brain
Interminable—often all in vain—
And, if successful, no Return again: }
A Road whose very Preparation scared
The Traveller who yet must be prepared.
Who then this Travel to Result would bring
Needs both a Lion's Heart beneath the Wing,
And even more, a Spirit purified
Of Worldly Passion, Malice, Lust, and Pride:
Yea, ev'n of Worldly *Wisdom*, which grows dim

¹*Sýmurgh*—i.e. "Thirty-Birds"—a fabulous Creature like the Griffin of our Middle Ages: the Arabian Anka.

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

And dark, the nearer it approaches *Him*,
Who to the Spirit's Eye alone reveal'd,
By sacrifice of Wisdom's self unseal'd;
Without which none who reach the Place could bear
To look upon the Glory dwelling there."

One Night from out the swarming City Gate
Stept holy Bajazyd, to meditate
Alone amid the breathing Fields that lay
In solitary Silence leagues away,
Beneath a Moon and Stars as bright as Day. }
And the Saint wondering such a Temple were,
And so lit up, and scarce one worshipper,
A voice from Heav'n amid the stillness said;
"The Royal Road is not for all to tread,
Nor is the Royal Palace for the Rout,
Who, even if they reach it, are shut out.
The Blaze that from my Harím window breaks
With fright the Rabble of the Roadside takes;
And ev'n of those that at my Portal din,
Thousands may knock for one that enters in."

Thus spoke the Tajidar: and the wing'd Crowd,
That underneath his Word in Silence bow'd,
Clapp'd Acclamation: and their Hearts and Eyes

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Were kindled by the Firebrand of the Wise.
They felt their Degradation: they believed
The word that told them how to be retrieved,
And in that glorious Consummation won
Forgot the Cost at which it must be done.
“ They only *long’d* to follow: they would go
Whither he led, through Flood, or Fire, or Snow ”—
So cried the Multitude. But some there were
Who listen’d with a cold disdainful air,
Content with what they were, or grudging Cost
Of Time or Travel that might all be lost;
These, one by one, came forward, and preferr’d
Unwise Objection: which the wiser Word
Shot with direct Reproof, or subtly round
With Argument and Allegory wound.

The Pheasant first would know by what pretence
The Tajidar to that pre-eminence
Was raised—a Bird, but for his lofty Crest
(And such the Pheasant had) like all the Rest—

Who answer’d—“ By no Virtue of my own
Sulayman chose me, but by *His* alone:
Not by the Gold and Silver of my Sighs
Made mine, but the free Largess of his Eyes.
Behold the Grace of Allah comes and goes

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

As to Itself is good: and no one knows
Which way it turns: in that mysterious Court
Not he most finds who furthest travels for 't.
For one may crawl upon his knees Life-long,
And yet may never reach, or all go wrong;
Another just arriving at the Place
He toil'd for, and—the Door shut in his Face:
Whereas Another, scarcely gone a Stride,
And suddenly—Behold he is Inside!—
But though the Runner win not, he that *stands*,
No Thorn will turn to Roses in *his* Hands:
Each one must do his best and all endure,
And all endeavour, hoping but not sure.
Heav'n its own Umpire is; its Bidding do,
And Thou perchance shalt be Sulayman's too."

One day Shah Mahmúd, riding with the Wind
A-hunting left his Retinue behind.
And coming to a River, whose swift Course
Doubled back Game and Dog, and Man and Horse,
Beheld upon the Shore a little Lad
A-fishing, very poor, and Tatter-clad
He was, and weeping as his Heart would break.
So the Great Sultan, for good humour's sake
Pull'd in his Horse a moment, and drew nigh,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

And after making his Salám, ask'd why
He wept—weeping, the Sultan said, so sore
As he had never seen one weep before.
The Boy look'd up, and “ Oh Amír,” he said, }
“ Sev'n of us are at home, and Father dead, }
And Mother left with scarce a Bit of Bread: }
And now since Sunrise have I fish'd—and see!
Caught nothing for our Supper—Woe is Me!”
The Sultan lighted from his Horse. “ Behold,”
Said he, “ Good Fortune will not be controll'd:
And, since To-day yours seems to turn from you,
Suppose we try for once what mine will do,
And we will share alike in all I win.”
So the Shah took, and flung his Fortune in,
The Net; which, cast by the Great Mahmúd's Hand,
A hundred glittering Fishes brought to Land.
The Lad look'd up in Wonder—Mahmúd smiled
And vaulted into Saddle. But the Child
Ran after—“ Nay, Amír, but half the Haul
Is yours by Bargain ”—“ Nay, To-day take all,”
The Sultan cried, and shook his Bridle free—
“ But mind—To-morrow All belongs to Me—”
And so rode off. Next morning at Divan
The Sultan's Mind upon his Bargain ran,
And being somewhat in a mind for sport
Sent for the Lad: who, carried up to Court,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

And marching into Royalty's full Blaze
With such a Catch of Fish as yesterday's,
The Sultan call'd and set him by his side,
And asking him, "What Luck?" The Boy replied,
" *This* is the Luck that follows every Cast,
Since o'er my Net the Sultan's Shadow pass'd."

Then came *The Nightingale*, from such a Draught
Of Ecstasy that from the Rose he quaff'd
Reeling as drunk, and ever did distil
In exquisite Divisions from his Bill
To inflame the Hearts of Men—and thus sang He—
"To me alone, alone, is giv'n the Key
Of Love; of whose whole Mystery possesst,
When I reveal a little to the Rest,
Forthwith Creation listening forsakes
The Reins of Reason, and my Frenzy takes:
Yea, whosoever once has quaff'd this wine
He leaves unlisten'd David's Song for mine.
In vain do Men for my Divisions strive,
And die themselves making dead Lutes alive:
I hang the Stars with Meshes for Men's Souls:
The Garden underneath my Music rolls.
The long, long Morns that mourn the Rose away
I sit in silence, and on Anguish prey:

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

But the first Air which the New Year shall breathe
Up to my Boughs of Message from beneath
That in her green Harím my Bride unveils,
My Throat bursts silence and *her* Advent hails,
Who in her crimson Volume registers
The Notes of Him whose Life is lost in hers.¹
The Rose I love and worship now is here;
If dying, yet reviving, Year by Year;
But that you tell of, all my Life why waste
In vainly searching; or, if found, not taste? ”

So with Division infinite and Trill
On would the Nightingale have warbled still,
And all the World have listen'd; but a Note
Of sterner Import check'd the love-sick Throat.

“ Oh watering with thy melodious Tears
Love's Garden, and who dost indeed the Ears
Of men with thy melodious Fingers mould
As David's Finger Iron did of old:²
Why not, like David, dedicate thy Dower
Of Song to something better than a Flower?
Empress indeed of Beauty, so they say,
But one whose Empire hardly lasts a Day,

¹ *It was sometimes fancied that the Rose had as many Petals as her Lover had Notes in his Voice.*

² *The Prophet David was supposed, in Oriental Legend, to have had the power to mould Iron into a Cuirass with the miraculous Power of his Finger.*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

By Insurrection of the Morning's Breath
That made her hurried to Decay and Death:
And while she lasts contented to be seen,
And worshipt, for the Garden's only Queen,
Leaving thee singing on thy Bough forlorn,
Or if she smile on Thee, perhaps in Scorn."

Like that fond Dervish waiting in the throng
When some World-famous Beauty went along,
Who smiling on the Antic as she pass'd—
Forthwith Staff, Bead and Scrip away he cast,
And grovelling in the Kennel, took to whine
Before her Door among the Dogs and Swine.
Which when she often went unheeding by,
But one day quite as heedless ask'd him—"Why?"—
He told of that one Smile, which, all the Rest
Passing, had kindled Hope within his Breast—
Again she smiled and said, "Oh self-beguiled
Poor Wretch, *at* whom and not *on* whom I smiled."

Then came the subtle Parrot in a coat
Greener than Greensward, and about his Throat
A Collar ran of sub-sulphureous Gold;
And in his Beak a Sugar-plum he troll'd,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

That all his Words with luscious Lispering ran,
And to this Tune—" Oh cruel Cage, and Man
More iron still who did confine me there,
Who else with him¹ whose Livery I wear
Ere this to his Eternal Fount had been,
And drunk what should have kept me ever-green.
But now I know the Place, and I am free
To go, and all the Wise will follow Me.
Some"—and upon the Nightingale one Eye
He leer'd—" for nothing but the Blossom sigh:
But I am for the luscious Pulp that grows
Where, and for which the Blossom only blows:
And which so long as the Green Tree provides
What better grows along Káf's dreary Sides?
And what more needful Prophet there than He
Who gives me Life to nip it from the Tree?"

To whom the Tajidar—" Oh thou whose Best
In the green leaf of Paradise is drest,
But whose Neck kindles with a lower Fire—
Oh slip the collar off of base Desire,
And stand apparell'd in Heav'n's Woof entire! ² }

¹ *Khizar, Prophet and Keeper of the Well of Life; habited always in the Green which the Angels were supposed to wear; and whether from that reason, or some peculiar Phenomenon in the Air, constantly called Sky-colour by the Persian Poets.*

² *The sky is constantly called Green in Persian Poetry: whether because of the Tree of Heaven, Sidra: or of some fabled Emerald in Káf on which the World hinges: or because Green has been chosen*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

This Life that hangs so sweet about your Lips
But, spite of all your Khizar, slips and slips,
What is it but itself the coarser Rind
Of the True Life withinside and behind,
Which he shall never never reach unto
Till the gross Shell of Carcase he break through?"

For what said He, that dying Hermit, whom
Your Prophet came to, trailing through the Gloom
His Emerald Vest, and tempted—"Come with Me,
And Live." The Hermit answered—"Not with Thee.
Two Worlds there are, and *This* was thy Design,
And thou hast got it; but *The Next* is mine;
Whose Fount is *this* life's Death, and to whose Side
Ev'n now I find my Way without a Guide."

Then like a Sultan glittering in all Rays
Of Jewelry, and deckt with his own Blaze,
The glorious *Peacock* swept into the Ring:
And, turning slowly that the glorious Thing

(for whatever Reason) for the Colour of Life and Honour. The green tinge of some Oriental Skies is indeed noticed by Travellers: as we see a little also in our Northern Sunrise and Sunset: but still it must be an exceptional Phenomenon. Blue, or Purple, is rather devoted to Death and Mourning in the East. As, in this very Poem, one of the Stories is of the Sea being askt "why he dresses his Waves in Blue?"—And he answers he does so for the Loss of One who never will return.

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Might fill all Eyes with wonder, thus said He.
“ Behold, the Secret Artist, making me,
With no one Colour of the skies bedeckt,
But from its Angel’s Feathers did select
To make up mine withal, the Gabriel
Of all the Birds: though from my Place I fell
In Eden, when Acquaintance I did make
In those blest Days with that Sev’n-headed Snake,¹
And thence with him, my perfect Beauty marr’d
With these ill Feet, was thrust out and debarr’d.
Little I care for Worldly Fruit or Flower,
Would you restore me to lost Eden’s Bower,
But first my Beauty making all complete
With reparation of these ugly Feet.”

“ Were it,” ’t was answer’d, “ only to return
To that lost Eden, better far to burn
In Self-abasement up thy pluméd Pride,
And ev’n with lamer feet to creep inside—
But all mistaken you and all like you
That long for that lost Eden as the true;
Fair as it was, still nothing but the Shade
And Out-court of the Majesty that made.
That which I point you tow’rd, and which the King
I tell you of broods over with his Wing,

¹ *And, as the Tradition went, let the Snake into Eden.*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

With no deciduous leaf, but with the Rose
Of Spiritual Beauty, smells and glows:
No plot of Earthy Pleasance, but the whole
True Garden of the Universal Soul.”

For so Creation's Master-jewel fell
From that same Eden: loving which too well,
The Work before the Artist did prefer,
And in the Garden lost the Gardener.
Wherefore one Day about the Garden went
A voice that found him in his false Content,
And like a bitter Sarsar of the North ¹
Shrivell'd the Garden up, and drove him forth
Into the Wilderness: and so the Eye
Of Eden closed on him till by and by.

Then from a Ruin where conceal'd he lay
Watching his buried Gold, and hating Day,
Hooted *The Owl*.—"I tell you, my Delight
Is in the Ruin and the Dead of Night
Where I was born, and where I love to wone
All my Life long, sitting on some cold stone
Away from all your roystering Companies,
In some dark Corner where a Treasure lies;

¹ *Sarsar—a cold Blast.*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

That, buried by some Miser in the Dark,
Speaks up to me at Midnight like a Spark;
And o'er it like a Talisman I brood,
Companion of the Serpent and the Toad.
What need of other Sovereign, having found,
And keeping as in Prison underground,
One before whom all other Kings bow down,
And with his glittering Heel their Foreheads crown? ”
“ He that a Miser lives and Miser dies,
At the Last Day what Figure shall he rise? ”

A Fellow all his life lived hoarding Gold,
And, dying, hoarded left it. And behold,
One Night his Son saw peering through the House
A Man, with yet the semblance of a Mouse,
Watching a crevice in the Wall—and cried—
“ My Father? ”—“ Yes,” the *Musulman* replied,
“ Thy Father! ”—“ But why watching thus? ”—“ For
fear
Lest any smell my Treasure buried here.”
“ But wherefore, Sir, so metamousified? ”
“ Because, my Son, such is the true outside
Of the inner Soul by which I lived and died.” }

“ Aye,” said *The Partridge*, with his Foot and Bill
Crimson with raking Rubies from the Hill,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

And clattering his Spurs—"Wherewith the Ground
"I stab," said he, "for Rubies, that, when found
I swallow; which, as soon as swallow'd, turn
To Sparks which through my beak and eyes do burn.
Gold, as you say, is but dull Metal dead,
And hanging on the Hoarder's Soul like Lead:
But Rubies that have Blood within, and grown
And nourisht in the Mountain Heart of Stone,
Burn with an inward Light, which they inspire,
And make their Owners Lords of their Desire."¹

To whom the Tajidar—"As idly sold
To the quick Pebble as the drowsy Gold,
As dead when sleeping in their mountain mine
As dangerous to Him who makes them shine:
Slavish indeed to do their Lord's Commands,
And slave-like, aptest to escape his Hands,
And Serve a second Master like the first,²
And working all their wonders for the worst."

Never was Jewel after or before
Like that Sulayman for a Signet wore:
Whereby one Ruby, weighing scarce a grain,
Did Sea and Land and all therein constrain,

¹ Every jewel had its special Charm, and so was worn in Ring or Amulet.

² There is a Story of some one who, falling from a Roof, and wondering what his Turquoise had done for him, was answered, "Well—you see it has kept itself unbroken."

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Yea, ev'n the Winds of Heav'n—made the fierce East
Bear his League-wide Pavilion like a Beast,
Whither he would: yea, the Good Angel held
His subject, and the lower Fiend compell'd.
Till, looking round about him in his pride,
He overtax'd the Fountain that supplied,
Praying that after him no Son of Clay
Should ever touch his Glory. And one Day }
Almighty God his Jewel stole away,
And gave it to the Div, who with the Ring
Wore also the resemblance of the King,
And so for forty days play'd such a Game
As blots Sulayman's forty years with Shame.

Then *The Shah-Falcon*, tossing up his Head
Blink-hooded as it was—"Behold," he said,
"I am the chosen Comrade of the King,
And perch upon the Fist that wears the Ring;
Born, bred, and nourisht in the Royal Court,
I take the Royal Name and make the Sport.
And if strict Discipline I undergo
And half my Life am blinded—be it so;
Because the Shah's Companion ill may brook
On aught save Royal Company to look.
And why am I to leave my King, and fare
With all these Rabble Wings I know not where?"

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

“ Oh blind indeed ”—the Answer was, “ and dark
To any but a vulgar Mortal Mark,
And drunk with Pride of Vassalage to those
Whose Humour like their Kingdom comes and goes;
All Mutability: who one Day please
To give: and next Day what they gave not seize:
Like to the Fire: a dangerous Friend at best,
Which who keeps farthest from does wiseliest.”

A certain Shah there was in Days foregone
Who had a lovely Slave he doated on,
And cherish'd as the Apple of his Eye,
Clad gloriously, fed sumptuously, set high, }
And never was at Ease were *He* not by, }
Who yet, for all this Sunshine, Day by Day
Was seen to wither like a Flower away.
Which, when observing, one without the Veil
Of Favour ask'd the Favourite—“ Why so pale
And sad? ” thus sadly answer'd the poor Thing—
“ No Sun that rises sets until the King,
Whose Archery is famous among Men,
Aims at an Apple on my Head; ¹ and when

¹ *Tell's Apple, long before his Time: and by whomsoever invented, a Fancy which (as was likely) would take lasting hold of the Oriental Mind. In Chodsko's Popular Persian Songs (Oriental Translation Fund, 1842) is a sort of Funeral Chaunt on Zulfakhar Khan by one*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

The stricken Apple splits, and those who stand
Around cry 'Lo! the Shah's unerring Hand!'
Then He too laughing asks me 'Why so pale
And sorrow-some? as could the Sultan fail,
Who such a master of the Bow confest,
And aiming by the Head that he loves best.' "

Then on a sudden swoop'd *The Phoenix* down
As though he wore as well as gave The Crown:¹
And cried—"I care not, I, to wait on Kings,
Whose crowns are but the Shadow of my Wings!"
"Aye," was the Answer—"And, pray, how has sped,
On which it lighted, many a mortal Head?"

A certain Sultan dying, his Vizier
In Dream beheld him, and in Mortal Fear
Began—"Oh mighty Shah of Shahs! Thrice-blest"—
But loud the Vision shriek'd and struck its Breast,
And "Stab me not with empty Title!" cried—

*of his Slaves; and the following Passage in it: "Your Gun from the
Manufactory of Loristan shines like a Cloud gilded by the Rays of
the Sun. Oh Serdar! your Place is now empty: you were my Master:
Your Gun from the Manufactory of Cabúl shined in your Hands like
a Bunch of Roses. Your Ball never missed a Flower put in the
middle of my Front Hair."*

¹ *He was supposed to be destined to Sovereignty over whom the
Shadow of the wings of the Phoenix passed.*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

“ One only Shah there is, and none beside,
Who from his Throne above for certain Ends
Awhile some Spangle of his Glory lends
To Men on Earth; but calling in again
Exacts a strict account of every Grain.
Sultan I lived, and held the World in scorn: }
Oh better had I glean'd the Field of Corn! }
Oh better had I been a Beggar born, }
And for my Throne and Crown, down in the Dust
My living Head had laid where Dead I must!
Oh wither'd, wither'd, wither'd, be the Wing
Whose overcasting Shadow made me King!”

Then from a Pond, where all day long he kept,
Waddled the dapper *Duck* demure, adept
At infinite Ablution, and precise
In keeping of his Raiment clean and nice.
And “ Sure of all the Race of Birds,” said He,
“ None for Religious Purity like Me,
Beyond what strictest Rituals prescribe—
Methinks I am the Saint of all our Tribe,
To whom, by Miracle, the Water, that
I wash in, also makes my Praying-Mat.”

To whom, more angrily than all, replied
The Leader, lashing that religious Pride,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

That under ritual Obedience
To outer Law with inner might dispense:
For, fair as all the Feather to be seen,
Could one see *through*, the Maw was not so clean:
But He that made both Maw and Feather too
Would take account of, seeing through and through.

A Shah returning to his Capital,
His subjects drest it forth in Festival,
Thronging with Acclamation Square and Street,
And kneeling flung before his Horse's feet
Jewel and Gold. All which with scarce an Eye
The Sultan superciliously rode by:
Till coming to the public Prison, They
Who dwelt within those grisly Walls, by way
Of Welcome, having neither Pearl nor Gold,
Over the wall chopt Head and Carcase roll'd,
Some almost parcht to Mummy with the Sun,
Some wet with Execution that day done.
At which grim Compliment at last the Shah
Drew Bridle: and amid a wild Hurrah
Of savage Recognition, smiling threw
Silver and Gold among the wretched Crew,
And so rode forward. Whereat of his Train
One wondering that, while others sued in vain

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

With costly gifts, which carelessly he pass'd,
But smiled at ghastly Welcome like the last;
The Shah made answer—"All that Pearl and Gold
Of ostentatious Welcome only told:
A little with great Clamour from the Store
Of Hypocrites who kept at home much more.
But when those sever'd Heads and Trunks I saw—
Save by strict Execution of the Law
They had not parted company; not one
But told my Will not talk'd about, but *done*."

Then from a Wood was heard unseen to coo
The Ring-dove—"Yúsuf! Yúsuf! Yúsuf! Yú-"
(For thus her sorrow broke her Note in twain,
And, just where broken, took it up again)
"-suf! Yúsuf! Yúsuf! Yúsuf!"—But one Note,
Which still repeating, she made hoarse her throat:

Till checkt—"Oh You, who with your idle Sighs
Block up the Road of better Enterprise;
Sham Sorrow all, or bad as sham if true,
When once the better thing is come to *do*;
Beware lest wailing thus you meet *his* Doom
Who all too long his Darling wept, from whom
You draw the very Name you hold so dear,
And which the World is somewhat tired to hear."

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

When Yúsuf from his Father's Home was torn,
The Patriarch's Heart was utterly forlorn,
And, like a Pipe with but one stop, his Tongue
With nothing but the name of "Yúsuf" rung.
Then down from Heaven's Branches flew the *Bird*¹
Of Heav'n, and said "God wearies of that word:
Hast thou not else to do and else to say?" }
So Jacob's lips were sealéd from that Day. }
But one Night in a Vision, far away
His darling in some alien Field he saw
Binding the Sheaf; and what between the Awe
Of God's Displeasure and the bitter Pass
Of passionate Affection, sigh'd "Alas—"
And stopp'd—But with the morning Sword of Flame
That oped his Eyes the sterner Angel's came—
"For the forbidden Word not utter'd by
Thy Lips was yet sequester'd in that Sigh."
And the right Passion whose Excess was wrong
Blinded the aged Eyes that wept too long.

And after these came others—arguing,
Enquiring and excusing—some one Thing,
And some another—endless to repeat,
But, in the Main, Sloth, Folly, or Deceit.

¹ *Gabriel.*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Their Souls were to the vulgar Figure cast
Of earthly Victual not of Heavenly Fast.
At last one smaller Bird, of a rare kind,
Of modest Plume and unpretentious Mind,
Whisper'd, " Oh Tajidar, we know indeed
How Thou both knowest, and would'st help our Need;
For thou art wise and holy, and hast been
Behind the Veil, and there *The Presence* seen.
But we are weak and vain, with little care
Beyond our yearly Nests and daily Fare—
How should we reach the Mountain? and if there
How get so great a Prince to hear our Prayer?
For there, you say, dwells *The Symurgh* alone
In Glory, like Sulayman on his Throne,
And we but Pismires at his feet: can He
Such puny Creatures stoop to hear, or see;
Or hearing, seeing, *own* us—unakin
As He to Folly, Woe, and Death, and Sin? "—

To whom the Tajidar, whose Voice for those
Bewilder'd ones to full Compassion rose—
" Oh lost so long in Exile, you disclaim
The very Fount of Being whence you came,
Cannot be parted from, and, will or no,
Whether for Good or Evil must re-flow!
For look—the Shadows into which the Light

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Of his pure *Essence* down by infinite
Gradation dwindles, which at random play
Through Space in Shape indefinite—one Ray
Of his Creative *Will* into *defined*
Creation quickens: We that swim the Wind,
And they the Flood below, and Man and Beast
That walk between, from Lion to the least
Pismire that creeps along Sulayman's Wall—
Yea, that in which they swim, fly, walk, and crawl—
However near the Fountain Light, or far
Removed, yet *His* authentic Shadows are;
Dead Matter's Self but the dark Residue
Exterminating Glory dwindles to.
A Mystery too fearful to the Crowd
To utter—scarcely to Thyself aloud—
But when in solitary Watch and Prayer
Consider'd: and religiously beware
Lest Thou the Copy with the Type confound;
And *Deity*, with Deity indrown'd,—
For as pure Water into purer Wine
Incorporating shall itself refine
While the dull Drug lies half-resolved below,
With Him and with his Shadows is it so:
The baser Forms, to whatsoever Change
Subject, still vary through their lower Range:
To which the *higher* even shall decay,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

That, letting ooze their better Part away
For Things of Sense and Matter, in the End
Shall merge into the Clay to which they tend.
Unlike to him, who straining through the Bond
Of outward Being for a Life beyond,
While the gross Worldling to *his* Centre clings,
That draws him deeper in, exulting springs
To merge him in the central *Soul* of Things. }
And shall not he pass home with other Zest
Who, with full Knowledge, yearns for such a Rest,
Than he, who with his better self at strife,
Drags on the weary Exile call'd *This Life?*—
One, like a child with outstretcht Arms and Face
Up-turn'd, anticipates his Sire's Embrace;
The other crouching like a guilty Slave
Till flogg'd to Punishment across the Grave.
And, knowing that *His* glory ill can bear
The unpurged Eye; do thou Thy Breast prepare; }
And the mysterious Mirror He set there,
To temper his reflected Image in,
Clear of Distortion, Doubleness, and Sin:
And in thy Conscience understanding *this*,
The *Double* only *seems*, but The *One is*,
Thy-self to Self-annihilation give
That this false *Two* in that true *One* may live.
For this I say: if, looking in thy Heart,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Thou for *Self-whole* mistake thy *Shadow-part*,
That Shadow-part indeed into *The Sun*
Shall melt, but senseless of its Union:
But in that Mirror if with purgéd eyes
Thy Shadow Thou *for* Shadow recognize,
Then shalt Thou back into thy Centre fall
A conscious Ray of that eternal *All*."

He ceased, and for awhile Amazement quell'd
The Host, and in the Chain of Silence held:
A Mystery so awful who would dare—
So glorious who would not wish—to share?
So Silence brooded on the feather'd Folk,
Till here and there a timid Murmur broke
From some too poor in honest Confidence,
And then from others of too much Pretence;
Whom both, as each unduly hoped or fear'd,
The Tajidar in answer check'd or cheer'd.

Some said their Hearts were good indeed to go
The Way he pointed out: but they were slow
Of Comprehension, and scarce understood }
Their present Evil or the promised Good: }
And so, tho' willing to do all they could, }
Must not they fall short, or go wholly wrong,
On such mysterious Errand, and so long?
Whom the wise Leader bid but Do their Best

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

In Hope and Faith, and leave to *Him* the rest,
For He who fix'd the Race, and knew its Length
And Danger, also knew the Runner's Strength.

Shah Mahmúd, absent on an Enterprize,
Ayas, the very Darling of his eyes,
At home under an Evil Eye fell sick,
Then cried the Sultan to a soldier " Quick!
To Horse! to Horse! without a Moment's Stay,—
The shortest Road with all the Speed you may,—
Or, by the Lord, your Head shall pay for it! "—
Off went the Soldier, plying Spur and Bit—
Over the sandy Desert, over green
Valley, and Mountain, and the Stream between,
Without a Moment's Stop for rest or bait,—
Up to the City—to the Palace Gate—
Up to the Presence-Chamber at a Stride—
And Lo! The Sultan at his Darling's side!—
Then thought the Soldier—" I have done my Best,
And yet shall die for it." The Sultan guess'd
His Thought and smiled. " Indeed your Best you did,
The nearest Road you knew, and well you rid:
And if *I* knew a shorter, my Excess
Of Knowledge does but justify thy Less."

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

And then with drooping Crest and Feather, came
Others, bow'd down with Penitence and Shame.
They long'd indeed to go; "but how begin,
Mesh'd and entangled as they were in Sin
Which often-times Repentance of past wrong
As often broken had but knit more strong?"

Whom the wise Leader bid be of good cheer,
And, conscious of the Fault, dismiss the Fear,
Nor at the very Entrance of the Fray
Their Weapon, ev'n if broken, fling away:
Since Mercy on the broken Branch anew
Would blossom were but each Repentance true.

For did not God his Prophet take to Task?
"*Sev'n-times* of Thee did Kárún Pardon ask;
Which, hadst thou been like Me his Maker—yea,
But present at the Kneading of his Clay
With those twain Elements of Hell and Heav'n,—
One prayer had won what Thou deny'st to Sev'n."

For like a Child sent with a fluttering Light
To feel his way along a gusty Night
Man walks the World: again and yet again
The Lamp shall be by Fits of Passion slain:
But shall not He who sent him from the Door
Relight the Lamp once more, and yet once more?

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

When the rebellious Host from Death shall wake
Black with Despair of Judgment, God shall take
Ages of holy Merit from the Count
Of Angels to make up Man's short Amount,
And bid the murmuring Angel gladly spare
Of that which, undiminishing his Share
Of Bliss, shall rescue Thousands from the Cost
Of Bankruptcy within the Prison lost.¹

Another Story told how in the Scale
Good Will beyond mere Knowledge would prevail.

In Paradise the Angel Gabriel heard
The Lips of Allah trembling with the Word
Of perfect Acceptation: and he thought
“Some perfect Faith such perfect Answer wrought,
But whose?”—And therewith slipping from the Crypt
Of Sidra,² through the Angel-ranks he slipt
Watching what Lip yet trembled with the Shot
That so had hit the Mark—but found it not.
Then, in a Glance to Earth, he threaded through
Mosque, Palace, Cell and Cottage of the True
Belief—in vain; so back to Heaven went

¹ *This paragraph may be omitted, and the two preceding ones reversed.*

² *Sidra, the Tree of Paradise, or Heaven.*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

And—Allah's Lips still trembling with assent!
Then the tenacious Angel once again
Threaded the Ranks of Heav'n and Earth—in vain—
Till, once again return'd to Paradise,
There, looking into God's, the Angel's Eyes
Beheld the Prayer that brought that Benison
Rising like Incense from the Lips of one
Who to an Idol bowed—as best he knew
Under that False God worshipping the True.

And then came others whom the summons found
Not wholly sick indeed, but far from sound:
Whose light inconstant Soul alternate flew
From Saint to Sinner, and to both untrue;
Who like a niggard Tailor, tried to match
Truth's single Garment with a worldly Patch.
A dangerous Game; for, striving to adjust
The hesitating Scale of either Lust,
That which had least within it upward flew,
And still the weightier to the Earth down drew,
And, while suspended between Rise and Fall,
Apt with a shaking Hand to forfeit all.

There was a Queen of Egypt like the Bride
Of Night, Full-moon-faced and Canopus-eyed,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Whom one among the meanest of her Crowd
Loved—and she knew it, (for he loved aloud)
And sent for him, and said “Thou lov’st thy Queen:
Now therefore Thou hast this to choose between:
Fly for thy Life: or for this one night Wed
Thy Queen, and with the Sunrise lose thy Head.” }
He paused—he turned to fly—she struck him dead.
“For had he truly loved his Queen,” said She,
“He would at once have giv’n his Life for me,
And Life and Wife had carried: but he lied;
And loving only Life, has justly died.”

And then came one who having clear’d his Throat
With sanctimonious Sweetness in his Note
Thus lisp’d—“Behold I languish from the first
With passionate and unrequited Thirst
Of Love for more than any mortal Bird.
Therefore have I withdrawn me from the Herd
To pine in Solitude. But Thou at last
Hast drawn a line across the dreary Past,
And sure I am by Fore-taste that the Wine
I long’d for, and Thou tell’st of, shall be mine.”

But he was sternly checkt. “I tell thee this:
Such Boast is no Assurance of such Bliss:
Thou canst not even fill the sail of Prayer

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Unless from *Him* breathe that authentic Air
That shall lift up the Curtain that divides
His Lover from the Harím where *He* hides—
And the Fulfilment of thy Vows must be,
Not from thy Love for Him, but His for Thee.”

The third night after Bajazyd had died,
One saw him, in a dream, at his Bed-side,
And said, “Thou Bajazyd? Tell me, Oh Pýr,
How fared it there with Munkar and Nakýr?”¹
And Bajazyd replied, “When from the Grave
They met me rising, and ‘If Allah’s slave’
Ask’d me, ‘or collar’d with the Chain of Hell?’
I said ‘Not I but God alone can tell:
My Passion for his service were but fond
Ambition had not He approved the Bond:
Had He not round my neck the Collar thrown
And told me in the Number of his own;
And that *He* only knew. What signifies
A hundred Years of Prayer if none replies?’”

“But,” said Another, “then shall none the Seal
Of Acceptation on his Forehead feel
Ere the Grave yield them on the other Side

¹ *The two Angels who examine the Soul on its leaving the Body.*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Where all is settled?"

But the Chief replied—

"Enough for us to know that who is meet
Shall enter, and with unprovéd Feet,
(Ev'n as he might upon the Waters walk)
The Presence-room, and in the Presence talk
With such unbridled License as shall seem
To the Uninitiated to blaspheme."

Just as another Holy Spirit fled,
The Skies above him burst into a Bed
Of Angels looking down and Singing clear
"Nightingale! Nightingale! thy Rose is here!"
And yet, the Door wide open to that Bliss,
As some hot Lover slights a scanty Kiss,
The Saint cried "All I sigh'd for come to *this*?" }
I who life-long have studied, Lord, to be
Not of thy Angels one, but one with Thee!"

Others were sure that all he said was true:
They were extremely wicked, that they knew:
And much they long'd to go at once—but some,
They said, so unexpectedly had come

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Leaving their Nests half-built—in bad Repair—
With Children in—Themselves about to pair—
“ Might he not choose a better Season—nay,
Better perhaps a Year or Two’s Delay,
Till all was settled, and themselves more stout
And strong to carry their Repentance out—
And then ”——

“ And then, the same or like Excuse,
With harden’d Heart and Resolution loose
With dallying: and old Age itself engaged
Still to shirk that which shirking we have aged;
And so with Self-delusion, till, too late,
Death upon all Repentance shuts the Gate;
Or some fierce blow compels the Way to choose,
And forced Repentance half its Virtue lose.”

As of an aged Indian King they tell
Who, when his Empire with his Army fell
Under young Mahmúd’s Sword of Wrath, was sent
At sunset to the Conqueror in his Tent;
But, ere the old King’s silver head could reach
The Ground, was lifted up—with kindly Speech,
And with so holy Mercy re-assured,
That, after due Persuasion, he abjured
His idols, sate upon Mahmúd’s Divan,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

And took the Name and Faith of Musulman.
But when the Night fell, in his Tent alone
The poor old King was heard to weep and groan
And smite his Bosom; which, when Mahmúd knew,
He went to him and said "Lo, if Thou rue
Thy lost Dominion, Thou shalt wear the Ring
Of thrice as large a Realm." But the dark King
Still wept and Ashes on his Forehead threw
And cried "Not for my Kingdom lost I rue;
But thinking how at the Last Day will stand
The Prophet with *The Volume* in his Hand,
And ask of me 'How was 't that, in thy Day
Of Glory, Thou didst turn from Me and slay
My People; but soon as thy Infidel
Before my True Believers' Army fell
Like Corn before the Reaper—thou didst own
His Sword who scoutedst *Me?*' Of seed so sown
What profitable Harvest should be grown?" }

Then after cheering others who delay'd,
Not of the Road but of Themselves afraid,
The Tajidar the Troop of those address'd,
Whose uncomplying Attitude confess'd
Their Souls entangled in the old Deceit,
And hankering still after forbidden Meat—

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

“ Oh ye who so long feeding on the Husk
Forgo the Fruit, and doating on the Dusk
Of the false Dawn, are blinded by the True:
That in the Maidán of this World pursue
The Golden Ball, which, driven to the Goal,
Wins the World's Game but loses your own Soul:
Or like to Children after Bubbles run
That still elude your Fingers; or, if won,
Burst in Derision at your Touch; all thin
Glitter without, and empty Wind within.
So as a prosperous Worldling on the Bed
Of Death—‘ Behold, I am as one,’ he said,
Who all my Life long have been measuring Wind,
And, dying, now leave even that behind ’—
This World 's a Nest in which the Cockatrice
Is warm'd and hatcht of Vanity and Vice:
A false Bazár whose Wares are all a lie,
Or never worth the Price at which you buy:
A many-headed Monster that, supplied
The faster, faster is unsatisfied;
So as one, hearing a rich Fool one day
To God for yet one other Blessing pray,
Bid him no longer bounteous Heaven tire
For Life to feed, but Death to quench, the Fire.
And what are all the Vanities and Wiles
In which the False World decks herself and smiles

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

To draw Men down into her harlot Lap?
Lusts of the Flesh that Soul and Body sap,
And, melting Soul down into carnal Lust,
Ev'n that for which 't is sacrificed disgust:
Or Lust of worldly Glory—hollow more
Than the Drum beaten at the Sultan's Door,
And fluctuating with the Breath of Man
As the Vain Banner flapping in the Van.
And Lust of Gold—perhaps of Lusts the worst;
The mis-created Idol most accurst
That between Man and Him who made him stands:
The Felon that with suicidal hands
He sweats to dig and rescue from his Grave,
And sets at large to make Himself its Slave.

“ For lo, to what worse than oblivion gone
Are some the cozening World most doated on.
Pharaoh tried *Glory*: and his Chariots drown'd:
Kárún with all his Gold went underground:
Down toppled Nembroth¹ with his airy Stair:
Schedád among his Roses lived—but *where*?

“ And as the World upon her victims feeds
So She herself goes down the Way she leads.
For all her false allurements are the Threads
The Spider from her Entrail spins, and spreads

¹ *Nimrod*.

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

For Home and hunting-ground: And by and bye
Darts at due Signal on the tangled Fly,
Seizes, dis-wings, and drains the Life, and leaves
The swinging Carcase, and forthwith re-weaves
Her Web: each Victim adding to the store
Of poison'd Entrail to entangle more.
And so She bloats in Glory: till one Day
The Master of the House, passing that way,
Perceives, and with one flourish of his Broom
Of Web and Fly and Spider clears the Room.

“ Behold, dropt through the Gate of Mortal Birth,
The Knightly Soul alights from Heav'n on Earth;
Begins his Race, but scarce the Saddle feels,
When a foul Imp up from the distance steals, }
And, double as he will, about his Heels }
Closer and ever closer circling creeps,
Then, half-invited, on the Saddle leaps,
Clings round the Rider, and, once there, in vain
The strongest strives to thrust him off again.
In Childhood just peeps up the Blade of Ill,
That Youth to Lust rears, Fury, and Self-will:
And, as Man cools to sensual Desire,
Ambition catches with as fierce a Fire;
Until Old Age sends him with one last Lust
Of Gold, to keep it where he found—in Dust.

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Life at both Ends, so feeble and constrain'd,
How should that Imp of Sin be slain or chain'd?

“ And woe to him who feeds the hateful Beast
That of his Feeder makes an after-feast!
We know the Wolf: by Stratagem and Force
Can hunt the Tiger down: but what Resource
Against the Plague we heedless hatch within,
Then, growing, pamper into full-blown Sin
With the Soul's Self: ev'n, as the wise man said,
Feeding the very Devil with God's own Bread;
Until the Lord his Largess misapplied
Resent, and drive us wholly from his Side?

“ For should the Grey-hound whom a Sultan fed,
And by a jewell'd String a-hunting led,
Turn by the Way to gnaw some nasty Thing
And snarl at Him who twitch'd the silken String,
Would not his Lord soon weary of Dispute,
And turn adrift the incorrigible Brute?

“ Nay, would one follow, and without a Chain,
The only Master truly worth the Pain,
One must beware lest, growing over-fond
Of even Life's more consecrated Bond,
We clog our Footsteps to the World beyond
Like that old Arab Chieftain, who confess'd

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

His Soul by two too Darling Things possess'd—
That only Son of his: and that one Colt
Descended from the Prophet's Thunderbolt.¹
'And I might well bestow the last,' he said,
'On him who brought me Word the Boy was dead.'

"And if so vain the glittering Fish we get,
How doubly vain to doat upon the Net,
Call'd Life, that draws them, patching up this thin
Tissue of Breathing out and Breathing in,
And so by husbanding each wretched Thread
Spin out Death's very Terror that we dread—
For as the Rain-drop from the sphere of God
Dropt for a while into the Mortal Clod
So little makes of its allotted Time
Back to its Heav'n itself to re-sublime,
That it but serves to saturate its Clay
With Bitterness that will not pass away."

One day the Prophet on a River Bank,
Dipping his Lips into the Channel, drank
A Draught as sweet as Honey. Then there came
One who an earthen Pitcher from the same
Drew up and drank: and after some short stay

¹ *The famous Borak.*

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Under the Shadow, rose and went his Way,
Leaving his earthen Bowl. In which, anew
Thirsting, the Prophet from the River drew,
And drank from: but the Water that came up
Sweet from the Stream, drank bitter from the Cup.
At which the Prophet in a still Surprise
For Answer turning up to Heav'n his Eyes,
The Vessel's Earthen Lips with Answer ran—
“The Clay that I am made of once was *Man*,
Who dying, and resolved into the same
Obliterated Earth from which he came
Was for the Potter dug, and chased in turn
Through long Vicissitude of Bowl and Urn:
But howsoever moulded, still the Pain
Of that first mortal Anguish would retain,
And cast, and re-cast, for a Thousand years
Would turn the sweetest Water into Tears.”

And after Death?—that, shirk it as we may,
Will come, and with it bring its After-Day—

For ev'n as Yúsuf, (when his Brotherhood
Came up from Egypt to buy Corn, and stood
Before their Brother in his lofty Place,
Nor knew him, for a Veil before his Face,)

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Struck on his Mystic Cup, which straightway then
Rung out their Story to those guilty Ten:—
Not to *them* only, but to every one;
Whatever we have said and thought and done,
Unburied with the Body shall fly up,
And gather into Heav'n's inverted Cup,
Which, stricken by God's Finger, shall tell all
The Story whereby we must stand or fall.
And though we walk this World as if behind
There were no Judgment, or the Judge half-blind,
Beware, for He with whom we have to do
Outsees the Lynx, outlives the Phoenix too—

So Sultan Mahmúd, coming Face to Face
With mightier numbers of the swarthy Race,
Vow'd that if God to him the battle gave,
God's Dervish People all the Spoil should have.
And God the Battle gave him; and the Fruit
Of a great Conquest coming to compute,
A Murmur through the Sultan's Army stirr'd
Lest, ill committed to one hasty Word,
The Shah should squander on an idle Brood
What should be theirs who earn'd it with their Blood,
Or go to fill the Coffers of the State.
So Mahmúd's Soul began to hesitate:

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Till looking round in Doubt from side to side
A raving Zealot in the Press he spied,
And call'd and had him brought before his Face,
And, telling, bid him arbitrate the case.
Who, having listen'd, said—"The Thing is plain:
If Thou and God should never have again
To deal together, rob him of his share:
But if perchance you should—why then Beware!"

So spake the Tajidar: but Fear and Doubt
Among the Birds in Whispers went about:
Great was their Need: and Succour to be sought
At any risk: at any Ransom bought:
But such a Monarch—greater than Mahmúd—
The Great Himself! Why how should he be woo'd
To listen to them? they too having come
So suddenly, and unprepared from home
With any Gold, or Jewel, or rich Thing
To carry with them to so great a King—
Poor Creatures! with the old and carnal Blind,
Spite of all said, so thick upon the Mind,
Devising how they might ingratiate
Access, as to some earthly Potentate.

"Let him that with this Monarch would engage
Bring the Gold Dust of a long Pilgrimage:

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

The Ruby of a Bleeding Heart, whose Sighs
Breathe more than Amber-incense as it dies;
And while in naked Beggary he stands
Hope for the Robe of Honour from his Hands.
And, as no gift this Sovereign receives
Save the mere Soul and Self of him who gives,
So let that Soul for other none Reward
Look than the Presence of its Sovereign Lord.”
And as his Hearers seem'd to estimate
Their Scale of Glory from Mahmúd the Great,
A simple Story of the Sultan told
How best a subject with his Shah made bold—

One night Shah Mahmúd who had been of late
Somewhat distemper'd with Affairs of State
Stroll'd through the Streets disguised, as wont to do—
And, coming to the Baths, there on the Flue
Saw the poor Fellow who the Furnace fed
Sitting beside his Water-jug and Bread.
Mahmúd stept in—sat down—unask'd took up
And tasted of the untasted Loaf and Cup,
Saying within himself, “Grudge but a bit,
And, by the Lord, your Head shall pay for it!”
So having rested, warm'd and satisfied
Himself without a Word on either side,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

At last the wayward Sultan rose to go.
And then at last his Host broke silence—"So?—
Art satisfied? Well, Brother, any Day
Or Night, remember, when you come this Way
And want a bit of Provender—why, you
Are welcome, and if not—why, welcome too."—
The Sultan was so tickled with the whim
Of this quaint Entertainment and of him
Who offer'd it, that many a Night again
Stoker and Shah foregather'd in that Vein—
Till, the poor Fellow having stood the Test
Of true Good-fellowship, Mahmúd confess'd
One Night the Sultan that had been his Guest: }
And in requital of the scanty Dole
The Poor Man offer'd with so large a soul,
Bid him ask any Largess that he would—
A Throne—if he *would* have it, so he *should*.
The Poor Man kiss'd the Dust, and "All," said he,
"I ask is what and where I am to be;
If but the Shah from time to time will come
As now and see me in the lowly Home
His presence makes a palace, and my own
Poor Flue more royal than another's Throne."

So said the cheery Tale: and, as they heard,
Again the Heart beneath the Feather stirr'd:

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Again forgot the Danger and the Woes
Of the long Travel in its glorious Close:—
“ Here truly all was Poverty, Despair
And miserable Banishment—but *there*
That more than Mahmúd, for no more than Prayer
Who would restore them to their ancient Place,
And round their Shoulders fling his Robe of Grace.”
They clapp’d their Wings, on fire to be assay’d
And prove of what true Metal they were made,
Although defaced and wanting the true Ring
And Superscription of their rightful King.

“ The Road! The Road!” in countless voices cried
The Host—“ The Road! and who shall be our Guide?”
And they Themselves “ The Tajidar!” replied:

Yet to make doubly certain that the Voice
Of Heav’n accorded with the People’s Choice,
Lots should be drawn; and He on whom should light
Heav’n’s Hand—they swore to follow him out-right.
This settled, and once more the Hubbub quell’d,
Once more Suspense the Host in Silence held,
While, Tribe by Tribe, the Birds their Fortune drew;
And Lo! upon the Tajidar it flew.

Then rising up again in wide and high
Circumference of wings that mesh’d the sky
“ The Tajidar! The Tajidar!” they cry—
“ The Tajidar! The Tajidar!” with Him

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Was Heav'n, and They would follow Life and Limb!
Then, once more fluttering to their Places down,
Upon his Head they set the Royal Crown
As Khalif of their Khalif so long lost,
And Captain of his now repentant Host;
And setting him on high, and Silence call'd,
The Tajidar, in Pulpit-throne install'd,
His Voice into a Trumpet-tongue so clear
As all the wingéd Multitude should hear
Raised, to proclaim the Order and Array
Of March; which, many as it frighten'd—yea,
The Heart of Multitudes at outset broke,
Yet for due Preparation must be spoke.

—A Road indeed that never Wing before
Flew, nor Foot trod, nor Heart imagined—o'er
Waterless Deserts—Waters where no Shore—
Valleys comprising cloudhigh Mountains: these
Again their Valleys deeper than the Seas:
Whose Dust all Adders, and whose vapour Fire:
Where all once hostile Elements conspire
To set the Soul against herself, and tear
Courage to Terror—Hope into Despair,
And Madness; Terrors, Trials to make stray
Or stop where Death to wander or delay:
Where when half dead with Famine, Toil, and Heat,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

'T was Death indeed to rest, or drink, or eat.
A Road still waxing in Self-sacrifice
As it went on: still ringing with the Cries
And Groans of Those who had not yet prevail'd,
And bleaching with the Bones of those who fail'd:
Where, almost all withstood, perhaps to earn
Nothing: and, earning, never to return.—

And first the *VALE OF SEARCH*: an endless Maze,
Branching into innumerable Ways
All courting Entrance: but one right: and this
Beset with Pitfall, Gulf, and Precipice,
Where Dust is Embers, Air a fiery Sleet,
Through which with blinded Eyes and bleeding Feet
The Pilgrim stumbles, with Hyæna's Howl
Around, and hissing Snake, and deadly Ghoul,
Whose Prey he falls if tempted but to droop,
Or if to wander famish'd from the Troop
For fruit that falls to ashes in the Hand,
Water that reacht recedes into the Sand.
The only word is "Forward!" Guide in sight,
After him, swerving neither left nor right,
Thyself for thine own Victual by Day,
At night thine own Self's Caravanserai.
Till suddenly, perhaps when most subdued
And desperate, the Heart shall be renew'd

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

When deep in utter Darkness, by one Gleam
 Of Glory from the far remote *Harím*,
 That, with a scarcely conscious Shock of Change,
 Shall light the Pilgrim toward the Mountain Range
 Of KNOWLEDGE:¹ where, if stronger and more pure
 The Light and Air, yet harder to endure;
 And if, perhaps, the Footing more secure,
 Harder to keep up with a nimble Guide,
 Less from lost Road than insufficient Stride—
 Yet tempted still by false Shows from the Track,
 And by false Voices call'd aside or back,
 Which echo from the Bosom, as if won
 The Journey's End when only just begun,

¹ In the original Poem there are Seven Valleys of Probation: not very significant in their spiritual Outline, as Tholuck implies: and very confused in their Allegorical Detail, as G. de Tassy admits. Other great Sufi Doctors distinguished "The Road" of Self-perfection into other Stages, some more, some less in Number than Attar: but Tholuck tells us Three was the usual Scale of Gradation: and, one must admit, quite enough.

Vulgo tres solent majoris minorisve Perfectionis gradus Muhammedani numerare &c.—Ssufii vel pariter tres vel quatuor Gradus posuere. I Scheriat, Lex: II Terikat, Iter: III Hakikat, Veritas, quibus adjunxerunt quartam aliqui: IV Marifat, Cognitio In Metsnawi non inveni Graduum mentionem nisi T. I. p. 72. 'Quum videas Rubrum, aliosque Colores, qui fit ut non cernas hæc tria Lumina'—Sæpius ut solet proluxe de Lege, Itinere, Veritate, Attarus cornicatur nec tamen significat memorabile quidquam nisi quod perpetuo asserat hos Gradus se invicem quasi in Nuce continere Sex Gradus constituerat Bajesid, caput Ruscheniorum: I Lex. II Veritas. III Scientia. IV. Appropinquatio. V Junctio. VI (اندلس) (indwelling in God) Quies in Deo &c. Refert doctissimus D. Leyden e Dabistano edocuisse Bajesidum patrem suum quatuor a Propheta ipso Gradus positos esse &c. &c. Tholuck's Ssufismus, Berol. 1821. p. 325 &c.

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

And not a Mountain Peak with Toil attain'd
But shows a Top yet higher to be gain'd.
Wherefore still Forward! Forward! Love that fired
Thee first to search, by Search so re-inspired
As that the Spirit shall the carnal Load
Burn up, and double wing Thee on the Road;
That wert thou knocking at the very Door
Of Heav'n, thou still would'st cry for More, More, More!

Till loom in sight Káf's Mountain Peak ashroud
In Mist—uncertain yet Mountain or Cloud,
But where the Pilgrim 'gins to hear the Tide
Of that one Sea in which the Sev'n subside;
And not the Sev'n Seas only: but the sev'n
And self-enfolded Spheres of Earth and Heav'n—
Yea, the Two Worlds, that now as Pictures sleep
Upon its Surface—but when once the Deep
From its long Slumber 'gins to heave and sway—
Under that Tempest shall be swept away
With all their Phases and Phenomena: }
Not senseless Matter only, but combined
With Life in all Varieties of Kind;
Yea, ev'n the abstract Forms that Space and Time
Men call, and Weal and Woe, Virtue and Crime,
And all the several Creeds, like those who fell
Before them, Musulman and Infidel

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Shall from the Face of Being melt away,
Cancell'd and swept as Dreams before the Day.
So hast thou seen the Astrologer prepare
His mystic Table smooth of Sand, and there
Inscribe his mystic Figures, Square, and Trine,
Circle, and Pentagram, and heavenly Sign
Of Star and Planet: from whose Set and Rise,
Meeting and Difference, he prophesies;
And, having done it, with his Finger clean
Obliterates as never they had been.

Such is when reacht the Table Land of *One*
And *Wonder*: blazing with so fierce a Sun
Of Unity that blinds while it reveals
The Universe that to a Point congeals, }
So, stunn'd with utter Revelation, reels }
The Pilgrim, when that *Double-seeming* House,
Against whose Beams he long had chafed his Brows,
Crumbles and cracks before that Sea, whose near
And nearer Voice now overwhelms his Ear.
Till blinded, deafen'd, madden'd, drunk with doubt
Of all within Himself as all without,
Nay, whether a *Without* there be, or not,
Or a *Within* that doubts: and if, then *what?*—
Ev'n so shall the bewilder'd Pilgrim seem
When nearest waking deepliest in Dream,

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

And darkest next to Dawn; and lost what had
When *All* is found: and just when sane quite Mad—
As one that having found the Key once more
Returns, and Lo! he cannot find the Door
He stumbles over—So the Pilgrim stands
A moment on the Threshold—with raised Hands
Calls to the eternal Sáki for one Draught
Of Light from the One Essence: which when quaff'd,
He plunges headlong in: and all is well
With him who never more returns to tell.
Such being then the Race and such the Goal,
Judge if you must not Body both and Soul
With Meditation, Watch, and Fast prepare.
For he that wastes his Body to a Hair
Shall seize the Locks of Truth: and He that prays
Good Angels in their Ministry way-lays:
And the Midnightly Watcher in the Folds
Of his own Darkness God Almighty holds.
He that would prosper here must from him strip
The World, and take the Dervish Gown and Scrip:
And as he goes must gather from all Sides
Irrelevant Ambitions, Lusts, and Prides,
Glory and Gold, and sensual Desire,
Whereof to build the Fundamental Pyre
Of Self-annihilation: and cast in
All old Relations and Regards of Kin
And Country: and, the Pile with this perplex

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

World platform'd, from the Fables of the Next
Raise it tow'rd Culmination, with the torn
Rags and Integuments of Creeds out-worn;
And top the giddy Summit with the Scroll }
Of *Reason* that in dingy Smoke shall roll }
Over the true Self-sacrifice of Soul:
(For such a Prayer was his—" Oh God, do Thou
With all my Wealth in the other World endow
My Friends: and with my Wealth in *this* my Foes,
Till bankrupt in *thy* Riches I repose!")
Then, all the Pile completed of the Pelf
Of either World—at last throw on *Thyself*,
And with the Torch of Self-negation fire;
And ever as the Flames rise high and higher,
With Cries of agonizing Glory still
All of that *Self* burn up that burn up will,
Leaving the Phoenix that no Fire can slay
To spring from its own Ashes kindled—nay,
Itself an inextinguishable Spark
Of Being, *now* beneath Earth-ashes dark,
Transcending these, at last *Itself* transcends
And with the One Eternal Essence blends.

The Moths had long been exiled from the Flame
They worship: so to solemn Council came,
And voted *One* of them by Lot be sent

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

To find their Idol. One was chosen: went.
And after a long Circuit in sheer Gloom,
Seeing, he thought, the TAPER in a Room
Flew back at once to say so. But the chief
Of *Mothistán* slighted so slight Belief,
And sent another Messenger, who flew
Up to the House, in at the window, through
The Flame itself; and back the Message brings,
With yet no sign of Conflict on his wings.
Then went a Third, who spurr'd with true Desire,
Plunging at once into the sacred Fire,
Folded his Wings within, till he became
One Colour and one Substance with the Flame.
He only knew the Flame who in it burn'd;
And only He could tell who ne'er to tell return'd.

After declaring what of this declared
Must be, that all who went should be prepared,
From his high Station ceased the Tajidar—
And lo! the Terrors that, when told afar,
Seem'd but as Shadows of a Noon-day Sun,
Now that the talkt of Thing was to be *done*,
Lengthening into those of closing Day
Strode into utter Darkness: and Dismay
Like Night on the husht Sea of Feathers lay, }

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Late so elate—" So terrible a Track!
Endless—or, ending, never to come back!—
Never to Country, Family, or Friend! "—
In sooth no easy Bow for Birds to bend!—
Even while he spoke, how many Wings and Crests
Had slunk away to distant Woods and Nests;
Others again in Preparation spent
What little Strength they had, and never went:
And others, after preparation due—
When up the Veil of that first Valley drew
From whose waste Wilderness of Darkness blew }
A Sarsar, whether edged of Flames or Snows,
That through from Root to Tip their Feathers
froze—

Up went a Multitude that overhead
A moment darken'd, then on all sides fled,
Dwindling the World-assembled Caravan
To less than half the Number that began.
Of those who fled not, some in Dread and Doubt
Sat without stirring: others who set out
With frothy Force, or stupidly resign'd,
Before a League, flew off or fell behind.
And howsoever the more Brave and Strong
In Courage, Wing, or Wisdom push'd along,
Yet League by League the Road was thicklier spread
By the fast falling Foliage of the Dead:

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Some spent with Travel over Wave and Ground:
Scorcht, frozen, dead for Drought, or drinking
drown'd. }

Famisht, or poison'd with the Food when found:
By Weariness, or Hunger, or Affright
Seduced to stop or stray, become the Bite
Of Tiger howling round or hissing Snake,
Or Crocodile that eyed them from the Lake:
Or raving Mad, or in despair Self-slain:
Or slaying one another for a Grain:—

Till of the mighty Host that fledged the Dome
Of Heav'n and Floor of Earth on leaving Home,
A Handful reach'd and scrambled up the Knees
Of Káf whose Feet dip in the Seven Seas;
And of the few that up his Forest-sides
Of Light and Darkness where *The Presence* hides,
But *Thirty*—thirty desperate draggled Things,
Half-dead, with scarce a Feather on their Wings,
Stunn'd, blinded, deafen'd with the Crash and Craze
Of Rock and Sea collapsing in a Blaze
That struck the Sun to Cinder—fell upon
The Threshold of the Everlasting *One*,
With but enough of Life in each to cry,
On *THAT* which all absorb'd—

And suddenly
Forth flash'd a wingéd Harbinger of Flame

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

And Tongue of Fire, and “ Who? ” and “ Whence they
came? ”

And “ Why? ” demanded. And the Tajidar }
For all the Thirty answer’d him—“ We are }
Those Fractions of the Sum of Being, far }
Dis-spent and foul disfigured, that once more
Strike for Admission at the Treasury Door.”

To whom the Angel answer’d—“ Know ye not
That He you seek recks little who or what
Of Quantity and Kind—himself the Fount
Of Being Universal needs no Count
Of all the Drops o’erflowing from his Urn,
In what Degree they issue or return? ”

Then cried the Spokesman, “ Be it even so: }
Let us but see the Fount from which we flow, }
And, seeing, lose Ourselves therein! ” And, Lo! }
Before the Word was utter’d, or the Tongue
Of Fire replied, or Portal open flung,
They were *within*—they were before the *Throne*,
Before the Majesty that sat thereon,
But wrapt in so insufferable a Blaze
Of Glory as beat down their baffled Gaze,
Which, downward dropping, fell upon a Scroll
That, Lightning-like, flash’d back on each the whole
Past half-forgotten Story of his Soul:

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Like that which Yúsuf in his Glory gave
His Brethren as some Writing he would have
Interpreted; and at a Glance, behold
Their own Indenture for their Brother sold!
And so with these poor Thirty: who, abasht
In Memory all laid bare and Conscience lasht,
By full Confession and Self-loathing flung
The Rags of carnal Self that round them clung;
And, their old selves self-knowledged and self-loathed,
And in the Soul's Integrity re-clothed,
Once more they ventured from the Dust to raise
Their Eyes—up to the Throne—into the Blaze,
And in the Centre of the Glory there
Beheld the Figure of—*Themselves*¹—as 't were
Transfigured—looking to Themselves, beheld
The Figure on the Throne en-miracled,
Until their Eyes themselves and *That* between
Did hesitate which *Sëer* was, which *Seen*:
They *That*, *That* They: Another, yet the Same;
Dividual, yet One: from whom there came
A Voice of awful Answer, scarce discern'd
From *which* to Aspiration *whose* return'd
They scarcely knew; as when some Man apart
Answers aloud the Question in his Heart—
“The Sun of my Perfection is a Glass

¹ “Symurgh” signifies “Thirty Birds.”

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Wherein from *Seeing* into *Being* pass
All who, reflecting as reflected see
Themselves in Me, and Me in Them: not *Me*,
But all of Me that a contracted Eye
Is comprehensive of Infinity:
Nor yet *Themselves*: no Selves, but of The All
Fractions, from which they split and whither fall.
As Water lifted from the Deep, again }
Falls back in individual Drops of Rain }
Then melts into the Universal Main. }
All you have been, and seen, and done, and thought,
Not *You* but *I*, have seen and been and wrought:
I was the Sin that from Myself rebell'd:
I the Remorse that tow'rd Myself compell'd:
I was the Tajidar who led the Track:
I was the little Briar that pull'd you back:
Sin and Contrition—Retribution owed,
And cancell'd—Pilgrim, Pilgrimage, and Road,
Was but Myself toward Myself: and Your
Arrival but *Myself* at my own Door:
Who in your Fraction of Myself behold ¹

¹ In one of Jami's Poems, which I can now refer to only by Memory, he conceives The Deity to have projected Creation as a Mirror in which to behold Himself. And he adds a pretty, but, as usual, faintly illustrative, Story; of some one who, going up from Canaan to Egypt, and wishing to carry "Yúsuf" the most acceptable Present he can, is counsel'd to carry a Mirror: in which looking, Yúsuf will see the most beautiful Object in the Universe.

BIRD-PARLIAMENT.

Myself within the Mirror Myself hold
To see Myself in, and each part of Me
That sees himself, though drown'd, shall ever see.
Come you lost Atoms to your Centre draw,
And *be* the Eternal Mirror that you saw:
Rays that have wander'd into Darkness wide
Return, and back into your Sun subside."—

This was the Parliament of Birds: and this
The Story of the Host who went amiss,
And of the Few that better Upshot found;
Which being now recounted, Lo, the Ground
Of Speech fails underfoot: But this to tell—
Their Road is thine—Follow—and Fare thee well.

**EXTRACTS FROM FITZGERALD'S LET-
TERS RELATING TO "SUFFOLK
SEA PHRASES."**

To Thomas Woolner.

Lowestoft, Jan. 30, '70.

.
I now post you my Sea Words—a work more fitted to my hands; though I also have my fears for this Immortality also. But these words also just amuse People—for the time—and that is all they were meant for.

The Chief Authority quoted is the Man whose Photo I sent you. I should not make free with his Words if I thought he would ever know, or ever care if he did know. But last year, when he and I were smoking together, his Pipe wanting a light, I pulled out (not knowing) a long Printer's Proof of the Words from my Pocket. Before he put it to the candle, to my consternation he began spelling the text, got a little interested, but totally unconscious how much was his own words, or by any possibility reported by me; so that when I said, 'There—there—light your Pipe,' I saw all was safe as the Mail. . . .

To S. Laurence.

Lowestoft, February 27 [1870].

. . . *I came here a few days ago, for the benefit of my old Doctor, The Sea, and my Captain's Company, which is as good. . . .*

EXTRACTS FROM FITZGERALD'S LETTERS.

If you sketch in a head, you might send it down to me to look at, so as I might be able to guess if there were any likelihood in that way of proceeding. Merely the Lines of Feature indicated, even by Chalk, might do. As I told you, the Head is of the large type, or size, the proper Capital of a six foot Body, of the broad dimensions you see in the Photograph. The fine shape of the Nose, less than Roman, and more than Greek, scarce appears in the Photograph; the Eye, and its delicate Eyelash, of course will remain to be made out; and I think you excel in the Eye.

*When I get home (which I shall do this week) I will send you two little Papers about the Sea Words and Phrases used hereabout, for which this Man (quite unconsciously) is my main Authority. You will see in them a little of his simplicity of Soul; but not the Justice of Thought, Tenderness of Nature, and other good Gifts which make him a Gentleman of Nature's grandest Type.**

* This was "Posh" (his name was Fletcher), a Lowestoft fisherman, for whom FitzGerald furnished the money to build a herring lugger in 1867, and with whom he went into partnership. The boat was called the "Meum and Tuum." (See p. 217, note s. v. HARRYWAUR.) FitzGerald afterwards sold his interest to "Posh" when he was able to buy it. FitzGerald admired him so much that he wished to have his portrait done by Mr. Laurence to hang between those of Thackeray and Tennyson which the artist had already made for him.

**SEA WORDS AND PHRASES ALONG
THE SUFFOLK COAST.**

THE VOCABULARY OF THE SEA BOARD.

I HAVE observed that Moor, Forby, and other glossarists, have confined themselves much to the *inland* phraseology, neglecting the *sea-board*, which is of so much interest in all English enquiry. When I was at Lowestoft last year I heard many words about boats, ships, fishing-gear, &c., which are *not* in these Vocabularies. Your friends who live on the spot, would do well to gather what of these they can lay hold of, and contribute them to the *East Anglian*—as, for instance, the parts of a *Net*:—the *beam* (the wooden back-bone); the *lutades* (a very curious word for the *bent irons* at the end—*qy.* whether from A. S. *Lut-ian*, to bend?) the *shales* (meshes) of which a *row* (I think) is called a *gong*. I am not *certain* of the orthography of these words; nor even in all cases of their exact appropriation: but you might accurately determine all, and much more. Many of such words are NOT known up the coast as far as Aldbro'. Even your *Score* for a narrow street, on a declivity, is not noticed in our Glossaries. I heard the word *Brenner*, for a flying gust over the water (as I remember). And one man spoke of a halo round the Sun as an *oven*, as I also gathered. But these require verifying, as also many others to be found out and recorded, before the modern SCHOOLMASTER has drubbed them out of the language. F.

[The above appeared in *The East Anglian* of July, 1861 (Vol. I p. 141), prior to the appearance of the *Sea Words and Phrases Along the Suffolk Coast*.]

Single Parts

SEA WORDS AND PHRASES

ALONG THE SUFFOLK COAST.

NO. I

EXTRACTED FROM THE EAST ANGLIAN NOTES AND QUERIES,

JANUARY, 1869.

LOWESTOFT:

SAMUEL TYMMS, 60, HIGH STREET.

1869.

[The words "Single Parts" are in FitzGerald's handwriting.]

SEA WORDS AND PHRASES ALONG THE SUFFOLK COAST.

To the Editor of the East Anglian.

MY DEAR SIR: You have asked me to send you some of the Sea Phrases I have picked up along our Suffolk coast—from Yarmouth to Harwich—and here they are.

Certainly, the only two East Anglian Vocabularies we had till within the last two years were deficient in this respect; and a considerable deficiency one must reckon it, considering how much of the country whose phraseology they undertake to register, is sea-board. But Major Moor, though born at Alderton, only two miles from the waves, went out to India as soon as he was in his teens; and, when at length returned to settle in England, occupied himself with an inland though not far inland farm, for the remainder of his wise, beneficent, and delightful life. Forby was busy with a parish near Downham Market; and though both might, under certain conditions, have almost heard the sea that washes their coasts, they neglected the language of its people for that of those “whose talk is of bullocks.”

I had for some time meditated a fusion of their two Glossaries, taking the more accurate Forby for groundwork, to be illustrated with Major Moor's delightful Suffolk Humour, and adding the Sea Phrases in which

SUFFOLK SEA PHRASES.

they both are wanting. Two years ago, however, Mr. Nall in some measure anticipated my dread exploit by the very good *East Anglian Vocabulary* which he appended to his *Yarmouth Guide*; bringing to his task a great deal of etymological research, such as the march of philology has made much easier since Forby's time, but such as I could make no pretensions to. I had, however, been more among the sailors, if not among the philologists, than Mr. Nall; and, being very glad of his book, sent him the words I now send you, to be incorporated, if he saw good, in any future edition of his book. He thanked me courteously, and since then I have heard no more of him.

Meanwhile, you think these words of mine may find a proper niche in your *East Anglian*; and you are very welcome to them. Picked up idly, with little care how or whence they came to hand, I doubt they will make a sorry show in your grave pages, whether as regards quantity or quality. They may, however, amuse some of your readers, and perhaps interest others in guessing at their history. On the whole, I think if you print them as I send them, it must be in some Christmas number, a season when even antiquaries grow young, scholars unbend, and grave men are content to let others trifle. Even *Notes and Queries*, with all the scholars that Bruce so long has led, sometimes smile, sometimes doze, and usually gossip about what is now the fashion to call Folklore (of which I send you some also) at Christmas. And so, wishing you, at any rate, a happy one, I remain, yours very sincerely,

E. F. G.

SUFFOLK SEA PHRASES.

P. S. I add a little incidental gossip at the end, in order to make up one number all of a piece, if you think your subscribers won't drop off in consequence.

ARMSTRONG. Arm in arm, "they came hallorin' down the street *armstrong*."

A good word surely.

BARK. "The surf *bark* from the Nor'ard"; or, as was otherwise said to me, "the sea aint lost his voice from the Nor'ard yet," a sign, by the way, that the wind is to come from that quarter.

A poetical word, such as those whose business is with the sea are apt to use. Listening one night to the sea some way inland, a sailor said to me, "Yes, sir, the sea roar for the loss of the wind"; which a landsman properly interpreted as only meaning that the sea made itself heard when the wind had subsided.

BARM-SKIN. The oil skin, or "*oily*," which covers the fisherman's *berm* or bosom, and reaches to the "*petti-coats*" of the same material, covering the lower man.

BEAM. The back-bone of the trawl-net.

BECKET. A sheath; knife-becket. [Aldbro' I think.]

BEGGAR'S OPERA. A hostelry for tramps, &c. (348)

BETE. To mend nets; the original A. S. of our "*better*."

Till aware of this, one is puzzled at the praise of some good housewife that "she's a capital hand at *beatin'*." "*Bet-ups*" are the nets so mended, and one constantly reads printed advertisements of so many new nets and so many *bet-ups* for sale.

SUFFOLK SEA PHRASES.

BETTY. To be over nice in putting things to order.
“He go betty, betty, bettyin’ about the boat like an old woman.”

BLACK HOGS. “The night’s as dark as black hogs.”

BLACK MEAT. Cured bacon.

BLARE. A mixture of pitch and tar.

BLOWFISH. Often met with by North Sea herring men; they tell me it is the whale. (Query?)

BOTTOM’S OUT. The bottom of the sea, when beyond reach of the lead.

BOWLS. Small barrels that serve as buoys to the warp which sustains the fleet of nets. These bowls are painted of different colours, to distinguish the different lengths of each fleet.

Bows. Pronounced as *rose* (but query, *bowze?*), beer.

So at least in the following inventory, which I am told comprises a fair fisherman’s breakfast “a pint of bows, a penny buster (*sc.*, burster, a penny loaf), a bit of kessen (cheese), a stinger (onion), and a pinch of tomtartarum (salt).” All this sounds very modern slang, and most likely it is so. Yet, in the case of “*buster*,” our really great East Anglian poet in a *very* early copy of verses, dated Aldborough, 1778, writes:

“Untaught how soon some hanging grave may *burst*,
And join thy flimsy substance to the *dust*.”

Vol. ii, p. 312. 1834.

BRABBLE. Of water; as over a shoal, when currents cross, &c.

BRAID. To net.

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BREACH. I have heard this form of *break* used with force. "There she lie, the sea breachin' over her."

BRENNER. A sharp gust of wind on the water.

BRIDLES. Ropes from either end of the trawl-beam, joining on to the dredge, or drudge, rope by which the net is worked from the boat.

BROUGE. To scorch? Men and boats "*brougin'* about in a hot calm."

BURN. "How the sea burn!" what you now hear children talk of as "being in a state of phosphorescence." Which is best?

Crabbe writes:

"And now your view upon the ocean turn,
And there the splendour of the waves discern."

Which last line I always take the liberty to read: "And see it, as the seaman phrases, burn"; leaving out all that comes after, about "*exploring* flames in the deep," "*scooping* the wave phosphoric," &c. [How *could* a Suffolk—and such a Suffolk—man write so?]

CADE. An old measure for herrings, "*disused*" says Mr. Nall; a cade of *sprats* is, however, talked of at Aldbro'—1000 of them.

CANT. To turn or slew round, as an anchored vessel with the tide. I do not find the word so used in naval dictionaries.

CHUCKLE. Clumsy, coarse. Among all the fishes of the sea that rise out of the deep to warn the seaman of

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foul weather—"Up come the codfish with his chuckle head." Halliwell says it means a "fool" in Devon.
CLOCK-CALM. "The sea was all clock-calm."

(349) Calm as one of our venerable old-fashioned eight-day clocks, with its open countenance and steady pulsation. The phrase will die away with them, for the new American timepieces don't hold up the same mirror to nature.

COCK'S-EYE. A bright opening in a dark sky.

A bright thought of some Southwold sailor perhaps, for I was told at Lowestoft that "the Southwold men were great men for the Cock's-eye."

COMPLAIN. A ship or boat begins to *complain* when her nails, seams, or timbers begin to give way.

Almost as good a phrase as "beginning to show symptoms of deterioration," &c.

COMPOSANT. Some years ago a young sailor was telling me of a "*composite*" lighting on each mast of a yawl during a stormy night. I did n't understand the word though I knew the meaning; an older sailor explained that "*composant*" was the proper word. I was not the wiser till I chanced upon the explanation in *Dampier's Voyages*.

"After four o'clock the thunder and the rain abated, and then we saw a *corpus sant* at our maintopmast head, on the very top of the truck of the spindle. This sight rejoiced our men exceedingly, for the height of the storm is commonly over when the *corpus sant*

SUFFOLK SEA PHRASES.

is seen aloft, but when they are seen lying on deck, it is generally accounted a bad sign."

"*A corpus sant* is a certain small glittering light; when it appears, as this did, on the very top of the mainmast, or at a yard-arm, it is like a star; but when it appears on the deck, it resembles a great glow-worm. The Spaniards have another name for it, though I take even this to be a Spanish or Portuguese name, and a corruption only of *corpus sanctum*," [I suppose *the host*, or starry pyx that holds it] "and I have been told that when they see them, they presently go to prayers, and bless themselves for the happy sight. I have heard some ignorant seamen discoursing how they have seen them creep, or, as they say, *travel*, about in the scuppers, telling many dismal stories that happened at such times. But I did never see any one stir out of the place where it was first fixt, except upon deck, where every sea washeth it about; neither did I ever see any but when we have had hard rain as well as wind; and therefore do believe it is some jelly. But enough of this." Dampier's men probably called the word "*corpusant* or *corposant*, whence *composant*, and, after the invention of certain candles peculiar to the nineteenth century, *composite*. What wise children now call it I don't know, whether phosphorescence, electricity, or what not. But they will doubtless smile with kindly pity at "old Dampier's' *jelly*"; though when *we* were children any theory of "jelly" would have gone a long way in finding favour with us.

CONGER-EEL. Sometimes cast ashore alive and kicking in winter.

I was wondering how so strong a fish suffered himself to be so stranded, and was told (at Felixstow) that it was because of the conger "blinding himself by striking at the stars." Poor ignorant

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seamen! as Dampier calls them; a sort of men who, as Montaigne says, mainly understand one thing only—which is—their own business—and therefore won't do for members of parliament at all.

CORE OR COAR. To untwist a rope or line from its *kinks*.

CORTON. Next village north of Lowestoft, and only here brought in for sake of a very harmless couplet. When the luggers come in from the North Sea, blowing, raining, &c., why then 't is not amiss to think that

“When you come to Corton,
The way begins to shorten.”

DAB. “Flat as a dab,” the sea calm-flat, as the flat fish, so commonly called—the learned name of it “I leave,” as Suffolk people say—not being myself a dab at such things. Nall gives “*spong*, a calm at sea.” An ugly word.

DAN OR DEN. A small buoy, with some ensign atop, to mark where the fishing lines have been *shot*; and the
(350) *dan* is said to “watch well” if it|hold erect against wind and tide. I have often mistaken it for some floating sea bird of an unknown species.

DART. “Dart before the wind,” the wind right aft; or, as I once heard a foreigner say, “*in my behind*.”

“DEEP as the North-star”; said (by the conger-eel man) of a very *wide-a-wake* babe, four months old.

DOGS. Dog-fish.

So terrible to the lugger's nets—gnawing them through with their shark's teeth, as soon as they find themselves enclosed along

SUFFOLK SEA PHRASES.

with the fish they come to devour. I am told they are mostly to be looked for so far out at sea as when "Lowestoft lights are dipping." The beachmen tell me they are a "*specie* of shark," and so I tell them "two of a trade," &c. The full-grown males are "*dogs*," the younger "*pups*," and the females,—*female dogs*.

DOMINO. Unoccupied (as "*neutral*," q. v.). "The house lay domino this twelvemonth."

DRAWS'L. Draw-sail, a large square canvas, which, its ends being made fast to the trawl boat, is flung overboard in order to draw the boat to windward by action of the tide.

DRIVE. To go herring fishing. *Nall*.

DROPE. Downward inclination.

DUTCH UNCLE. "There were the squires on the bench, but I took heart, and talked to 'em like a Dutch uncle." This, I trust, opens a wide field for conjecture.

FAG OUT. Fray out, as a rope's end. So the "*fag-end*" of anything. [Isl. *fæcka*, ad paucitatem redigi—redigere?]

FAIR; Clouds running to. "Do you think the wind 'll hold?" "Lord bless ye, look at the clouds a runnin' to a fair like."

FANNY ABOUT. A light variable wind fannies about.

FEATHER-WHITE. "The sea was all a feather-white" with foam.

FEW. Forby gives the word in the sense of "*little*," "a few broth," &c.; but he does not notice a meaning so very common on the coast; not implying "*little*" or

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scarcity at all, but simply *quantity*, more or less. "We brought in a good few of sprats," &c.

FIDDLE. "Kept her like a fiddle."

This little piece of wood and catgut, to draw forth whose wonderful speech seemed to Johnson the greatest wonder of human handicraft, has, we know, always had its charm for the sailor, whether on duty at sea, or *not* on duty ashore. Who can resist the delightful saucy "sailor's hornpipe," step or music? I really think the only national dance we have. So the sailor has taken the fiddle to compare the craft he loves to. "Kept her like a fiddle," he says of one who takes care of his craft; "she go like a violin," of the smart vessel herself, swift and glib as "the melody that's sweetly play'd in tune." And, by the way, I have heard them talk of "givin' her a tunin'"—*sc.*, by trying her, her spars, and her rigging, in such a sea and wind, that if she weather all that, she may be relied upon in any case.

FINE WEATHER FLOP. An unexpected dash of water over a vessel's sides in fine weather, and on a smooth sea.

FLAD SKY. *Fled* sky? Cloud that has settled in a bank to leeward.

FLEET OF NETS. Five or six score herring nets make "a fleet."

FOLT. To lap up a wet sail loosely, so as air may get in; *not* the same as *fold*, I hear; perhaps a looser form of it.

(351) FREE-EN. "If the wind free-en a bit,"—*sc.*, slant favourably. *Not* a very happy word.

FRESH-O'-WIND. A fresh breeze.

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FOOT-LOOSE. A vessel so disengaged from dock that she can start whenever she pleases. A pretty word.

FRANK. A familiar name for the heron on the river Deben, at any rate; from a supposed likeness to the harsh cry of the bird. So they call out "Fra-a-a-nk!" to salute and rouse him as he stands fishing on the ooze.

GAPE. [Pronounced in broadest *Kemble*, *garp*.] To open the mouth of a set net (*q. v.*) to the tide by means of a gāpe-rope. "His net 's anchored, but he ain't gāped yet."

GIN. "Clear as gin." A sailor's best compliment to water.

GONG. "One half the stitches which form the aperture or mesh of a net," says Mr. Nall, who quotes *A. S. gong*, a step, and *gongel-wafre*, a spider. I have heard the word used for a *gang*, or row, of meshes.

GYP. To gut a herring. *Nall*.

HANK. Stoppage. "Come to a dead hank," as by a change of wind, a calm, &c. [Hank, fastening of a gate. *Forby*.] Query *hang*?

HEFT. Anything such as wreck, or rock, that catches and holds the net fast under water. "He 's got a heft since sun-rise"; Isl. *hefti impidiri*. [Nall gives "hefty, rough weather or sea. Dan. and Germ. *heftig*."]]

HOBBLE. To go *scroping*, or saltwagin, *q. v.*

HOBBY-LANTERN. The jack-o'-lantern, will-o'-th'-wisp, &c., as given by *Forby*.

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Nor should he (Jack, I mean) need bringing in here, but for a habit of his which I only lately heard of on the coast—namely, Jack's inveterate hatred, or jealousy, (or love?) of any light but his own. He will fly and dash at lighted windows, I am told; and the sailor from whom I learned this knew of a friend who, coming home at night with a lantern, was violently assaulted in that quarter.

HOLIDAY. Any interval which the tarrer or varnisher of a vessel has neglected to cover. "Jem have left plenty of holidays, anyhow."

HOME. A home swell. A swell of the sea from withunder as it were, independent of any wind then blowing. "There 's no wind, but a nasty *home* on the beach." So we East Angles, you know, talk of meat *home-done*; thoroughly, to the core.

Nall gives, with something of the same meaning, "*slug*, said of heavy surf tumbling in with an off-shore wind, or a calm," giving several Northern etymons of *slug*, *slugga*, to buffet, thump, &c. I have since heard it called "*slog*"; far better.

HORSES. "Being in trouble with horses" is, I am assured, a never-failing sign of foul weather.

"But what do you mean by being in trouble with horses?" "Well, running away, kicking, pulling at 'em," &c.

I have seen some of your great Lowestoft giants, up to anything in their own element, turn tail, and "cut away" from some very peaceable bullocks. A six-foot Michael-Angelo-made fellow assured me he did n't mind a cow, but "was n't by no means *wropt up* in a bullock."

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NOTE.—Cyrus Redding heard from Beckford that Lord Nelson was very nervous when being driven about Fonthill by its master, in a phaeton drawn by two blood horses. Beckford, I suppose, would have been rather nervous on the quarter-deck of the “Victory,” at Trafalgar. Some one writing of those times gives a pretty description of seeing|some young men-of-war’s men ashore (352) on Mount Edgcumbe, poking with very long sticks at a poor snake in the grass. [It was not a Frenchman.]

HORRYWAUR. Fifty pounds to the philologer who will guess this riddle without looking to the end for its solution.

When first I knew Lowestoft, some forty years ago, the herring luggers (which then lay up on the beach, when not at sea), very many of them bore testimony to Wesley’s visits to the place, and his influence on the people (see Appendix). Beside the common family and familiar names, such as the William, Sarah Jane, Two Friends, Brothers, and such like; there were the Ebenezer, Barzillai, Salem, and many more Old Testament names; beside the Faith, Hope, Charity, &c., from later Revelation. A few vessels bore names in profane story—such as the Shannon (which, by-the-by, still *reigns*) after Sir Philip Broke’s victory; there was even a William Tell (no longer reigning), whose effigies, drest in an English sailor’s white ducks and blue jacket, pointed at the wind with a pistol from the mast-head. *That* was about the furthest reach of legendary or historical lore. But *now* the schoolmaster has been at sea, as well as abroad, and gone herring-driving—Bless me! there’s now a “Nil Desperandum,” a “Dum Spiro Spero,” and last, not least, a “Meum and Tuum”; though in the latter case it was very properly represented to the owners that the phrase being Latin, should properly run “Meum *et* Tuum.”

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Then even the detested "*Parley-vous*" has come into request; and you may hear of a "*scrunk*" of luggers very gravely enumerated in such order as the following. "Let me see—there was the Young William, the Chanticleer, the Quee Vive (*Qui vive*), the Saucy Polly, the Hosanna, and the Horrywaur!" Of the latter I could get no explanation, until one day it flashed upon me when I saw sailing out among the fleet, the "*Au Revoir*," belonging to a very good fellow who (according to the custom of nicknames hereabout) goes, as I believe his father went before him, under the name of "*Dickymilk*."¹

HUDDY. The upper and wider-meshed part of a sprat net. *Aldbros*.

HUSTLE. "The wind hustle in the trees," &c.—**CAPTAIN COOK**—himself a collier along these coasts—talks of the tide *hustling*, and also *hurtling*, a ship over to windward, &c.

JACKSON. "To clap on jackson," to crowd sail; or, as it is sometimes pleasantly called, "muslin."

JIFFLE. To work into. "She 've jiffled into the sand good tidily."

JILL. "Just air enough to jill us along."

JOALIES. Young herrings.

KID. To *signify* by hand and arm (*A. S. cydan*) how many herrings on board; the arm struck forward signifies *a last*; waved round, a thousand.

¹ *This custom is not unreasonable. There are of course so many Bills, Toms, Jacks, and Joes, and even so many surnames alike, that some peculiar nickname is wanted to distinguish them. This is supplied from any trivial peculiarity that comes first to hand. I was asking one day why a "coil-rope boy" was called "Farmer," and was told, because he once went about in a sort of slop which it was thought smacked of agriculture.*

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Kid, however, signifies by sound as well as by sight. I forgot to mention under "*clock-calm*," that those potent, grave and reverend seniors, the *old* eight-day clocks, are supposed to know a good deal of what goes on in the house they inhabit, more indeed than the masters themselves; fore-knowing, and by some hurried ticking or inward convulsion foretelling, the death of some member of the family. I was told of one distinctly "*kidding*" the approaching decease of his old mistress. "There was no mistake at all about it—why, the old clock fared in the biggest of agony."

KITTY. (Query Kittywake?) The middle-sized gull.

Seeing some kitties flying about some swimming *willocks* one evening, I was assured that the willock, after diving and coming up with a fish, presented it to the kitty, who flew down to receive it. [But query, as to the courteous intention on either side?]

LAST. Ten thousand herrings, A. S. *alæst*; Isl. *lest*. (353)

LAW. The wind turning so as to blow the lugger back on her nets, is said to blow "against the law."

LINT. *Net*, whether before or after being made up into *nets*.

LIPPER. To curl above water, as the *rimple* of the sea, or the backs of a *skoal* of fish.

LOFTY. A proper word for a *high* tide: sometimes also called "a slappin'—a ragin'-tide."

LŌGUY. (Query a form of *loggy*?) Heavy, slow, dull, as a ship or man.

LUM. The handle of an oar. Isl. *hlumm*. To *lum* the oars, to let the handles down into the boat without unshipping them. Ir. *leamh*, an oar, a rower. *Nall*.

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LUTE. Bent, curved (A. S. Lutian). The curved irons at each end of the trawl-beam are the *lute-heads*; and a *lute* stern is opposed to a square stern. I have seen a lugger described as of a "lute stern," in the registry of the vessel at the Lowestoft Custom-house. I believe the word is scarce known elsewhere.

MACKLANTAN. *Mackle and tan*—*macklintan* (philologists must settle the orthography), a scanty outfit of clothes brought on board. "Well, you 've brought a macklantan bundle, at any rate."

MAIN. *The main*; land as well as sea. "She got off the shoal and then struck on the main." Thus the word was formerly and generally used: when did the poets give it to the sea only?

MAKE. To increase; sea or wind. "The sea began to make at night-fall."

MAND. Nall writes "*maund*, a large open wicker basket used in the fisheries, and for sowing seed broadcast. I always hear it pronounced as spelt in A. S., the *a* long as in 'demand,' but the final *d* generally cut off." A *mand* of *sprats* = about 1000.

MARDLE. *To mardle*; to gossip. Forby only gives it "a pond" near at hand, for watering cattle, &c.; "exactly Fr. *mardelle*."

MARRAMS. "The *arunda arenaria*. Gael. *muran*, sea reed; Dutch *marren*, to bind; Isl. *marhalmr*, sea grass." Nall. It is the coarse, tufty, reed-grass growing about the Lowestoft Denes, and is called bents, and Bentlands, elsewhere. I have heard *marrams* transformed into *merry-mills*.

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MAZY. Sickly. Herrings about to shoot the roe are said to "*have the maze.*" Nall gives deriv. "*masyl* or *maxil*, *sekenesse.*" Pr. Parv. and several old quotations.

MILKMAID'S PATH. The milky way; as if the heavenly milkmaid had spilt her pail as she crossed over. Not so uncouth a fancy.

MITCH-BOARD. The truncated *midship* mast, upon which the lower'd foremast of the lugger leans, while fishing.

MOUSE TO. To tie a piece of twine across the mouth of a hook.

The hooks in a boat's rigging are "moused" by having a piece of twine tied across their mouths, to prevent the rolling of the boat causing them to jump out of the staples.

MUNK. To munk the sail is, as I understand, to fix the tack of a boat's lug-sail to the foremast, instead of to the *bumpkin*.

NAIL-SICK. When a vessel begins to *complain* in that (354) quarter. So *seam-sick*, &c.

NEIGHBOUR'S FARE. Doing as well as one's neighbours. "I may n't make a fortune, but I look for neighbour's fare nevertheless."

NEUTRAL. Unused; unappropriated. "That ground have been neutral these three years," &c.

NORSELS. The short lines supporting, at six inch intervals, the herring net on its rope. A. S. *nosle*, a point to tie with, &c. "Nostylle of nets." Prompt Parv. Nall.

OLD. "An old wind," &c.

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Not in the good or good-humoured sense, otherwise so common; "Old Fellow, Old Boy," &c., but quite the reverse, as if dating back to the "Old 'un," par excellence—*Old Nick* (which, by the way, is our most familiar name for him, &c., and implies a sort of sneaking regard, as if he was n't quite so black after all, as painted). So perhaps it may be when sailors talk of an "*old wind*," for a very foul one; an "*old wave*," for one that means mischief; a kind of humourous fling at the elements they are wedded to, for better or for worse. Forby quotes something of the sort from Shakespeare's *Merry Wives*; when nurse Quickly hears the doctor coming she says, "We shall have *old* abusing of God's patience and the King's English."

I have not been able to discover the history of one member of this most ancient family. "Old Gooseberry," I know; and "Old Sarah," I know; but who is "Old Boots?" he is well known in these parts, too. "Only let me clap a *taups'l* (topsail) on, and I'll run away from him like Old Boots." King James (Selden tells us) used to say that "old friends were like old shoes, they fitted easiest"; and I believe that old boots would be better to run away in, than new ones. But there's more in it than this. Let the learned discover.

"PERRY wind; half a gale. Fris. *perre*, a slight stir; Dan. *pirre*, to stimulate." *Nall*.

PICKER. A thornback; and, if the word be not properly *pricker*, an odd coincidence with Isl. *piga*, a maid!

POCKETS; along the side of the trawl-net, of which POKE is the jelly-bag end.

PROUD. Tight or "*taut*." "That rope is rather *proud*."

PRUDENT. I have heard this word thus oddly used con-

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cerning a ship. "That old Polly is scarce *prudent* to go to sea"; *sc.*, seaworthy.

RAFFLE. The tackle, spars, &c., of a ship.

RAM-FULL. Cram-full. "The harbour ram-full of ships," &c.

RANSACK. To examine and *try* the *norsels* of a net. Isl. *ransak*, inquisitio.

RAWSE. Conglomeration of clay, mud, and other soil, into a sort of rock-work. Is this Forby's *rosil*, *rosilles*?

REIGN. To continue in use. "The Hebe was an old ship ten year ago; but she *reign* still, I *hare*."

RIPPIER. "One who brings fish from the coast to sell inland. A. S. *ripa*." *Nall.* But Query?

RIXY. The smallest of the sea gulls. Tern?

RIMPLE. A form of ripple.

ROARERS. The men who shovel out the herrings from the lugger into the ped, or from the ped along the fish-curing floor, with *roaring shovels*.

This reminds one of a song once current on your coast, of which I can lay hold of no more than the burden, I suppose. It was told me by a clergyman.

"The roaring boys of Pakefield
Did n't know what to contrive,
They had but one poor parson,
And him they buried alive." (355)

RODE. "To spawn." Welsh, Danish, Isl., &c. *Nall.*

ROLLER. "A good roller a good rider"; that is to say,

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the breadth of beam and bottom that will make a vessel roll, will also make her ride comfortably at anchor.

I think that Tennyson somewhere uses "roller" for a wave breaking on the shore; perhaps a Lincolnshire word for such a wave as breaks along the low Lincolnshire coast, and which I have heard him say is the grandest wave, except those at the Land's End. The very metre of "Locksley Hall," which describes the Lincolnshire coast, is "*a roller*."

ROSTER. Rotation, turn.

By some new arrangement—whether sanctioned by the Trinity Board I know not—pilots do not serve ships as formerly, first called on first to go; but according to "*roster*"—each in turn.¹

SAFER. A freight of fish. "A good safer of mackerel, herring," &c. Nall, confidently, "*Sea-fare*." But query.

SALTWAGIN'. So pronounced (if not *solwagin'*) from, perhaps, an indistinct implication of *salt* (water), and *wages*. *Salvaging*, of course.

¹ *This is very often very convenient for themselves, and very much the reverse for the ship who signals for them. A few weeks ago, there were three foreign ships off a town not far from yours, one whole day, with flags up for pilots. The beachmen got a yawl ready, and ran for pilot A.; A. said it was B.'s roster; B. said it was C.'s; in short, of the several pilots called on, all declined, out of etiquette, and a due sense of roster, I suppose. There were possibly other considerations. One among them indeed told me that the yawl could not stand the sea and wind then rostering; or, if it could, could n't get alongside the ship to put a pilot on board. I said I supposed the poor beachmen were pretty good judges of what their yawl could do, and of the value of their own lives; and was there not a pilot cutter to go out if the yawls were not sufficient? To which it was replied that it was not a fit day for anybody to go out; that the ships with flags could dodge about very well till next day, &c. I think this roster wants re-consideration.*

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SAMP. To lull; sea or wind. "When the wind samped a little," &c. *Germ. sanft*, of course.

SCANDALIZE. To lower the peak of a schooner's main-sail! At any rate, when the sail is so left, she is said to have "her mainsail *scandalized*."

How could my friends have thought of this word, for this purpose? And yet, there *is* something in the *shape* of the word.

SCORE. A cut down a declivity, so well known in Lowestoft town, and at Beccles, I think; but I know nowhere else. It is, I suppose, the same as Yorkshire *scar*, and is easily traced to Iceland itself. The word is also used hereabout as *scour*, in the sense of making off hastily. "I scored along good tidily," &c.

SCROPER. A salwagin smack.

SCRUNK. A shoal (or, quite as properly, *skoal*) of fish, of course; but I also hear of a *scrunk* of wild fowl; of ships; nay, of Dickies on a common.

SCUD. To shake the herrings out of the net.

SEA-BAKERS. A Yarmouth name for the large trawl beams used on the North coast. *Nall*.

SET NET. An anchor'd net.

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SHALE. "The mesh of a net; from the *shale*, or netting-pin, thrust in to tighten and gauge it; A. S. *scyln*," says Mr. Nall. I think I have heard the word used for the pin only.

SHANK of lines; a certain length of fishing lines.

SHERE MAN. Share man; who has a certain share in the profits of a fishing voyage. The "*sheer*" of a vessel is its curve from stem to stern.

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SHIES. The palisades fixed on the beach to withstand the encroachments of the sea about Felixstow.

SHIM—SHIMMER. The glitter of fish coming above water, into the net.

When the mackerel men—after many and many an empty net—come to draw in one with a shimmer of fish in it, they say—

There 's a white,
And a shim,
And another after him;
And a white,
And a lily white,
And a scrunk ho!

SHIP'S HUSBAND; who lays in stores of provisions for the ship. This sounds a fine old term; I dare say is not peculiar to us, but I have not happened on it in print.

SHITTLE-NETS. Nets that have become rolled over and over into a cocoon, whether by tide at sea, or wind as they are drying ashore.

SHUT THE DOOR AFTER HIM; as a willock diving, or a man drowning.

SHREEP. To clear away partially; as mist, &c.

SILE. The fry of fish: Isl.

SLADE ROPE. At the bottom of the trawl net, raking the ground. *Slade*, a simple Isl. word; is still used inland, for a little valley.

SLAKE. [Qy. *Slack*?] An oily calm on the sea, proving, to smell as well as to sight, where the dog-fish is plying.

SMIGS. Small fry of herring, mackerel, eels, &c.

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SNOOD. (Pronounced *snud*). The separate end of the fishing line, to which the hook is attached.

SOLOMON-GUNDY. Salmagundi, of course; made of pickled herring, minced up raw with pepper, vinegar, &c.

SOU'WESTER. The very useful, but very ugly, oilskin head-gear, used by fishermen, and making their comely faces really look very like some of the flat fish they deal in.

No glossary was needed to tell what a sou'wester is, nor, probably, for the little superstition attached to it. The sailor, arriving from the north seas at nightfall, may go to his home, where the wife is sitting alone, thinking or not of him: just opening the door wide enough, he pitches his sou'wester into the room. The true good wife will run to the door at once, not minding the sou'wester. "But this may be old wives' mardle," said he who told me.

SPOOM. To scud before the wind.

Common in old writers: thus used by Dryden (who owes much of his vigour to his use of *the vulgar*):—

"When virtue *spooms* before a favouring gale,
My heaving wishes help to fill the sail."

This word we could well afford to keep in general use, though we scarce want its derivative.

SPOON-DRIFT. Foam (*spuma* is, of course, the original of (357) both words). "The sea was all a feather-white with spoon-drift."

SPORRY. Partial; the wind; sometimes also "*dollop*,"

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a word better applied to more substantial stuff, "a good dollop of money," &c.

SQUARE-FLOOD. SQUARE-EBB: when an anchored vessel has *canted* round so as her yards are at right angles to the flow or ebb of the sea.

STULL. An extra-large mackerel.

There is a word for the Philologist. Can it have to do with "*stalwart*," of whose derivation the dictionaries make odd work?

STANDARD. What has *worn* a long while; an old man; old horse; old coat; old boat, &c. "That 's a standard, I warrant."

STERN. "It 's a stern night "; like Shakespeare's "*dern*."

STIFLER. "He 's head-stifler at our club, I assure you."
Head man; leader.

STOCKER FISH. Refuse, such as thornback, roker, gurnet, &c., given to the apprentices on board smacks as their perquisite.

SUNWAY. The path of the sun's rays over the sea.
"Crossing the sunway there." So *moonway*.

SWATCH. (*Swash?*) *swatch-way*, &c., a narrow channel through a shoal.

SWILL. A basket for carrying fish from boat to shore.
It is made of unpeeled willows; Gael. *suil*, a willow;
Fr. *saule*, &c. *Nall*.

SWIPE. (Sweep, I suppose.) To *swipe* for lost anchors.

TABERNACLE. The receptacle for a mast.

TATTLE. "A little tattlin' breeze," &c.

TIZZET. A small rope from a fishing vessel's stem, taken

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by a "round turn" round the warp by which she rides, to make her ride the easier.

TOEING IT AND HEELING IT. A vessel pitching in the sea.

TOM AND JERRY SHOP. A beer-house. My friends were welcome to their "Beggar's Opera"; but they should n't have condescended thus low.

TORCH UP. "Once the wood is kindled it 'll soon torch up." Not so bad.

TOW. (Rhyming to "*now*"); nets. "Those over-grown luggers pull so hard on their tow, they tear it all to pieces."

TRAP-HANDED. Deceitful. "A trap-handed fellow." Not so bad, neither.

TRAT-TOW. Tract-tow; track rope; by which a vessel is towed along.

TWILL. To lie alongside. (Query.)

TWY; TWOY; or TWOYVE. To slew round, or become disengaged from any stoppage. "There she twoy!"—
[Wanted a Philologist.]

VEER AND HAUL. To vary. "The wind fare to veer-an'-haul all day long." Why *will* your Lowestoft men say "Veer-and-'aul," and so often misplace their *h* like cockneys?

WAKE UP. A vessel beginning to stir herself with a fresh air, after drowsy going. She then begins "*to talk*" also; and, still more lively, proceeds to "pick up her crumbs."

WARP. (Of herrings.) Four herrings; from A. S., *Isl.*, &c., to throw.

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Nall thinks, because of the fisherman "throwing out two in each hand at every count." He quotes from L'Estrange's *Household Accounts*, 1522. "Paid *xs.* for bryngyng of vi warpe of stock fyshe and vi warpe of lytill codde called habburdyn, *iiijd.*"

(358) **WAYS.** On the ways; on the slips of the shipwright, for repair.

WENT. The mesh of a net. *Nall.*

WHOLE WATER. Deep water, as opposed to "broken water," which is shallow.

WILLOCK. A Guillemot, I am told.

The same bird that, after "shutting the door after him," presents the kitty with the fish he has re-appeared with. This is not the action of an ill-mannered bird; nor have I seen anything at all wild in his demeanour. Yet, they say, "mad as a willock"; as we on shore say, with equal propriety, "mad as a hatter."

YARMOUTH CAPON, Major Moor tells us, was a name for a red herring; also called a "*Tom blowen.*"

APPENDIX.

I. CRABBE'S SUFFOLK.

Prime.

"We prune our hedges, *prime* our slender trees,
And nothing looks untutored, or at ease." *Borough.*

Moor defines "*priming*; pruning the lower, or *wash* boughs of a tree." But Forby, "to trim up the stems; to give them *the first* dressing in order to make them look

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shapely ”; which accords more with the original meaning of the word, and with Crabbe’s use of it.

But Crabbe has another word on the same subject, which is not found in Moor or Forby—and where else?—in such a sense; in which sense I am persuaded it *was* used, by some Suffolk people at least, from whom Crabbe caught it carelessly up. It has the true Suffolk stamp about it.

“ Where those dark shrubs, that now grow wild at will,
Were clipp’d in form, and *tantalised* with skill.”

Parish Register.

We should now, perhaps, say “*titivated*.”

Tantalize, Dogmatize, Moralize, &c., we are all familiarized with, in some way or other. So much cannot be said for another such word, as properly formed, which Crabbe uses, but did *not* pick up in Suffolk, I think. A too happy lover tells of having, in the midst of his own exultation, met a poor unhappy man;

“ And I was thankful for the moral sight,
Which *soberized* the vast and wild delight.”

Well, the word is worthy of the lines; and the lines of the foolish story they wind up. And this inequality and disproportion it is—this “loose screw” in so great a faculty; together with great carelessness in his later poems, and a want of what is called *Art* in all, that weighs down the popularity of a writer, whose couplets, Johnson, Pope, and Dryden, might have familiarly

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quoted, and whose whole poems, with all their imperfections, will live, old Wordsworth says, at least as long as anything written since—including his own.

(389) *Conceit*: in the sense of conception—noun and verb.
“ I du conceit ”—pronounced, of course, *concite*.

Ruth's father and mother have been waiting for her—(the passage is so fine that it is even a pleasure to transcribe, and I think no one will grudge to read it)—from morning till evening:—

“ Still she came not home ;
“ The night grew dark and yet she was not come ;
“ The east wind roared, the sea return'd the sound,
“ And the rain fell as if the world were drown'd.
“ There were no lights without ; and my good man,
“ To kindness frighten'd, with a groan began
“ To talk of Ruth, and pray ; and then he took
“ The Bible down, and read the Holy Book ;
“ For he had learning ; and when that was done,
“ We sat in silence—‘ whither can we run ? ’
“ We said, and then ran frightened from the door,
“ For we could bear our own conceit no more.”

What became of Ruth—let every good East Anglian who can afford it buy the book and see. What a Dryden line, the fourth!

Like; as we tack the word in full to the end of an adjective; adjective-*like*, not adjectively.

I am sorry to find this good old form supplanted by a vile compound: instead of the sky looking *squally-like*, *rainy-like*, “ my dear friends ” will say “ *squallified*,

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rainified," &c., for which they deserve a round dozen.
" *Fuimus Troes.*"

But to return to Crabbe. His word occurs in another passage, so fine that I *must* transcribe—one of the best glimpses of a ghost I know—because it *is* but a glimpse:—

" I loved in summer on the heath to walk,
" And seek the shepherd—shepherds love to talk ;—
" His boy, his Joe, he said, from duty ran,
" Took to the sea, and grew a fearless man—
" On yonder knoll—the sheep were in the fold—
" His Spirit passed me, *shivering-like* and cold ;
" I felt a fluttering, but I knew not how,
" And heard him utter, like a whisper, " *Now !* "—
" Soon came a letter from a friend to tell
" That he had fallen, and the hour he fell.' "

Dole. A word we are very familiar with, especially on the coast where Crabbe heard of it before his A B C :

" His very soul was not his own ; he stole
" As others ordered, and without *a dole.*" *Parish Register.*

Without having any share in the plunder, as *we* know, but I wonder if the word was generally understood? Crabbe felt called on to explain it by a note in another poem :

" He was a fisher from his earliest day,
" And placed "—(No! No! remember your old Aldbro'!)

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- “ And *shot* ” his nets within the borough’s bay; ¹
 (300) “ There by his skates, his herrings, and his soles,
 “ He lived, nor dreamed of Corporation-doles.” ²

Borough Election.

Lastly, the poet in several instances dismisses the final *s* from the 3rd person singular—after our oriental fashion. I confess to a liking for this; partly because of its ridding us of *one* hiss from our hissing language. And why, as Forby asks, *should* there be such an addition to this single person of the verb? He remarks that the auxiliary verbs do not follow the rule; and he quotes the conjugation of Icelandic *ber* (*porto*) to prove that our Suffolk usage has very ancient precedent in its favour; 1st person *ber*, 2nd *ber*, 3rd *ber*. That is, “ I bear, you bear, he bear ”; just as we Suffolk people now talk. Therefore, *I say*, that when Crabbe *say* so, it *do* not shock me, though I would not adopt the usage from him at this time of day. And, certainly, if I wrote verse meant to last (as I am sure Crabbe’s *will* last, though I am not

¹ *This recalls a local couplet, which you may, perhaps, find room for in a note. Loon is, I believe, the generic name for the diver tribe of sea-birds (French lumme); but hereabout used for a specie which, when seen busied about the broken water along the coast, indicates where the long-shore fisherman had best try his luck. So the proverb runs:*

*“ A Loon in a wash
 “ Is good as a shilling in a poor man’s purse.”*

Only that purse should surely be pouch; or still nearer the rhyme, and the sound of the French original, posh!

² “ I am informed that some explanation is here necessary, though I am ignorant for what class of readers it can be required.” And he goes on to explain everything; except the word, which simply means a share, whether of a boat’s earnings, or of corporation funds.

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sure that he reckoned upon it), I would take care to stick to the tongue that Shakespeare, Bacon, and our Bible have fixed for us.

There are several instances in his books; but I content myself with two: one of which was recited at the Literary Fund Dinner by a poet, who never made any such mistakes—W. T. Fitz-Gerald—and the other passed without a mark of comment under Johnson's own eyes.¹ But the old lion's eye was fast dimming then.

“When our relief from such resources *rise*,

“All painful sense of obligation dies.” *Borough Curate.*

“No; cast by fortune on a frowning coast,

“Which neither groves nor happy valleys *boast*, &c.” *Village.*

To be sure, the *rhyme* might have *misled* him, must we say?—or, perhaps, what will sometimes happen, the other *plural* noun in the sentence.

One maxim of Johnson's made a deep impression on Crabbe's mind, says his Biographer—“Never fear putting the strongest and best things you can think of into the mouth of your speaker, whatever may be his condition.” This reminds one a little of Goldsmith's joke, that, if Johnson had to make animals speak, his sprats would talk as big as whales. Johnson certainly misrepresented his own great powers by acting on his own advice; and his pupil, who has been called nature's best and sternest painter, and who certainly had as keen insight as any into

¹ “He is not to think his copy wantonly defaced: a wet sponge will wash all the red lines away, and leave the pages clean.” Johnson on returning the MS. of the *Village* to Sir Joshua.

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the larger half of *human* nature, sometimes loses his strong outline by daubing over it. And this, with subjects he had been most familiar with. He does not make (381) fishes talk; but he himself talks of the porpoise having been seen rolling about the day before a gale—

“Dark as the cloud and furious as the storm.”

And the sailor, come from the sea, with his children on his knees, and his friends about him, tells them of his dangers:

“When seas ran mountains high,
“When tempest raved, *when horrors veiled the sky*;
“When in the yawning gulf far down we drove,
“And gazed upon the *billowy mount above*,
“Till up that mountain, swinging with the gale,
“*We view’d the horrors of the watery vale.*”

When did he ever hear the like at Aldbro’, or elsewhere, from a *Sailor’s* mouth? Crabbe was thinking of Thomson and the poets of the century which he was born in, and out of which he had not quite risen into *himself*. Compare the foregoing with the old shepherd’s ghost—written 20 years after—when, however, the poet began to err from carelessness, as formerly from mistaken care, perhaps.¹

¹ *I may add that Crabbe speaks in his Borough, of two sorts of vessels common in his day, now not heard of, I believe:*

“Far other craft our prouder river shows;
“*Hoys, pinks, and sloops, brigs, brigantines, and snows.*”

Burney (*says the Annotator*) defines pink, a ship with a very narrow stern; *Fr. penque*. Snow seems something like what we now call a Bark; with “a third small mast just abaft the mainmast.”

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Having said thus much of the Poet's *Suffolk*, I must give one word of it from the capital biography of him by my noble old friend, his son George, Vicar of Bredfield, now gone the way of his father. In the admirable account of Mr. Tovell's Farm, at Parham—a perfect Dutch interior—he says that, while master and mistress were at dinner at the main table in the room, the “female servants” were “at a side table, called a *Bouter*.” As I could not for a long while get any explanation of this word, I thought the meaning might be—a table in a bight—or *bought*, as sometimes called—that is, in an angle, or corner of the room. At last I heard of some farmers who knew the thing well; that it was properly a “*Boulter* table”; a sort of covered hutch with a machine inside to *boulter* the meal for household use; and, when not so used, with a cover or lid to go over, which might serve as a table for a servant, or a chance guest. And *Boulter* might be pronounced *Bowter* in the same way as (Moor says, and we all know) *colt* is pronounced *cowt*; cold, *cowd*; hold, *howd*, &c.

Mr. Nall was not contented with this explanation, of which the farmers made no sort of doubt; he derives the word from Dutch and Flemish “*die booden*,” the domestic servants. So people must please themselves between the learned etymologist who has to cross the water for a derivation, and the unetymological farmers who went no further for it than the thing itself, which they had been familiar with from infancy.

One story draws another. The mention of Mr. Tovell's

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farm has recalled it to my memory, and as it includes the poet, his biographer, and one of the most venerable of old Suffolk words, it shall close this gossip, and leave
 (362) |the East Anglian to its usual tone and topics. Whoever has read that account of Parham farm, will remember that, not *Mr. Tovell*, but "*his Missis*" is the chief figure there. She was aunt to the Miss Elmy whom the Poet married, and used to boast that "she could screw up old Crabbe like a fiddle." In the *Life* there is a story of this good lady's once finding one of her maids daring to scrub—the *parlour* floor!—an office sacred to Mrs. Tovell herself. "*You wash such floors as these!—get down to the scullery—As true 's God 's in Heaven here comes Lord Rochford to call on Mr. Tovell!*" &c. And she whips off a scrubbing-apron, which she calls *her "mantle,"* and goes down to let his lordship in. It might have been this same servant, who, having been pursued one day by her mistress, armed with a frying-pan, said, when the chase was over, and she could draw breath in safety: "Well, this I *will* say: if an angel of *Hiv'n* was to come down and hire for *Mauther* with missis, she could n't give satisfaction." This the poet heard: and this his son told me—some happy day—or happy night.

Super-superlative Suffolk. Major Moor gives several instances of what we may call super-superlative Suffolk. "In speaking to the character of a couple of live Cross-bills—*Loxia curvi-rostra*—the owner, who wanted to

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sell, affirmed "they were the most docilisist bahds ever I see."

"Oak, we should say, is 'the *lastenest* wood'—the most endurable." (Query *enduring*?)

"I have, under several articles, noticed some of our rather curious superlatives. But, since all were written, I heard one, I think, surpassing. Walking over a ploughed field with a rustic, and noticing some spear-grass, he said—'It 's the *eatenest* thing that grow'—that is, the most exhausting, or devouring, of the soil." Moor's *Suffolk Words*.

"*Eatenest*," then, was the most surprising superlative the Major had heard up to the time of publishing his book. But he afterwards heard one that surpassed the surpassing. He was one day trying to persuade a keeper not to kill poor Hedgehogs, out of an idle superstition that they sucked Partridges' eggs. "Ah, yah, 'Major,'" says the man, "Don't tell me; they are the most *suckeggliest* warmin in the warld!" It is not even certain if the word did not culminate into "*suckeggletiest*."

I have called the man *a keeper*; meaning (if he were of Major Moor's own staff), one who would kill *vermin*; polecats, rats, hedgehogs, &c.; not a *Game-keeper* to preserve tame pheasants to be driven into a corner in troops to be shot for pleasure, and sold for profit. I suppose Major Moor would not have had one such on his estate, had it equalled that of some bull-dog-named Potentate, on whose large slice of Suffolk birds do accumulate and men decay; cottages left to ruin lest they should har-

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bour a dog, or a gun, or a poor man (also chargeable on the parish) to use them; so that the labourer has to go miles to and from his daily work. I do not know that Major Moor had a tenderness for a poacher; I think I may assert that he had for any man who should *so far* transgress the law in order to keep himself or his family from starving. Indeed, one fault—and but one—did I ever hear this Major charged with; and that was by (363) a very humane friend and fellow-magistrate of his; who told me that the Major sometimes hindered judicial business at the weekly bench: “You could scarce persuade him of a poor man’s guilt.”

With this good man’s memory, let this gossip come at least to a good end.

Wesley at Lowestoft.

Wesley had a great regard for Lowestoft and its people, as his Journal shows—that capital Journal, from which I think a book might be made for railway reading!—with its glimpses of England, its people and places, 100 years ago. As the *East Anglian* is a native of Lowestoft, and as in its Editor’s garden is the brick wall against which Wesley stood to preach his first sermon there, the following extracts from his Journal may find a place here.

1776. *Tuesday, Nov. 19th.* “I opened the new preaching-house at Lowestoft; a new and lightsome building. It was thoroughly filled with deeply attentive hearers.”

Wednesday, 20th. “Mr. Fletcher preached in the

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morning, and I at two in the afternoon. It then blew a thorough storm, so that it was hard to walk or stand, the wind being ready to take us off our feet. It drove one of the boats which were on the strand from its moorings out to sea. Three men were in it, who looked for nothing every moment but to be swallowed up. But presently, five stout men put off in another open boat, and, rowing for life, overtook them, and brought them safe to land." [I hope this was no Salwaging job.]

Thursday, 21st. "I preached at Beccles. A duller place I have seldom seen."

1779. *Monday, January 15th.* "I went to Norwich in the stage-coach, with two very disagreeable companions, called a gentleman and gentlewoman, but equally ignorant, insolent, lewd, and profane." [Thank God, the two former qualities are *never* to be met with now, especially in first-class carriages.]

Thursday, 18th. "I preached at Lowestoft, where is a great awakening, especially among youth and children; several of whom, between twelve and sixteen years of age, were a pattern to all about them."

1782. *Thursday, October 31st.* "I went on to Lowestoft, which is at present far the most comfortable place on the circuit."
1788. *Thursday, October 23rd.* "We went to Lowestoft, where the people have stood firm from the beginning."
1789. *Monday, October 6th.* "I preached at Loddon, North Cove, and Lowestoft. When I came into the town it blew a storm; and many cried out, 'So it always does when he comes.' But it fell as suddenly as it rose; for God heard the prayer." [I suppose "the town" means not Loddon,

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but Lowestoft; people remembering how it blew *once* when Wesley came 12 years before, as he has told us.]

1790. *Friday, October 15th.* "I went to Lowestoft to a steady, loving, united, society. The more strange it is that they neither increase nor decrease in number."

Wesley was then 88 years old, and, with none of the pains, conscious of the infirmity of age, of which he says he had not felt a symptom for 86 *years*. This was probably his last visit to Lowestoft; and on this occasion probably it was that Crabbe, the poet, saw and heard him—saw him, with his long white locks, assisted up into the pulpit by two deacons; and heard him apply to himself those lines from Cowley's *Anacreon*:

"Oft' by the women I am told,

"Poor Anacreon, thou grow'st old," &c.

Crabbe detested Dissent, new lights, sudden conversions, &c. But, like King Harry, he liked A MAN; and he saw and felt that Wesley was a very true and venerable one. He often spoke afterwards of his venerable look, cheerful air, and "the beautiful cadence he gave to these lines." See *Crabbe's Life*, by his son.

To the Editor of the East Anglian.

(1) DEAR SIR: Last Christmas I sent you a lot of sea-phrases, all the while conscious of others which I could not quite recover from memory, or noted down somewhere where I could not lay hands on them. Several of these

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have turned up since; several new to me, and several so familiar that I forgot they might be new to others, added; here is Christmas come again; and, if you again care to betray your grave readers into a little seasonable fooling as at this time last year, here is a little at your service, from yours truly,

E. F. G.

BAD BREAD. “Come to bad Bread”; to come worse off, whether by word, or other usage.

BEAN. “To throw in a Bean”—to put in one’s oar—throw in an objection; or—as I once heard an old-fashioned Farm-wife say to her husband—“Joe, bor, you must hull in an Obistacle.” She was speaking of an ill-devised marriage of her son’s.

BLIND SAIL. A sail that hangs so low as to blind the steersman to his course.

I don’t know what figure of speech this is called, any more than why a nut without a kernel is called a blind nut. Nor why a sailor, after he had been up all night saving men’s lives (and all “for Love”) in the gale of Friday, February 13th, 1869, said to me the morning after: “If the wind had n’t samp’d as it did, we should have had the shore blind with wrecks before dawn.” “Poor ignorant Seamen!”

BAWLY-BOAT. A large yawl-like boat used for *Salwag-ing* purposes; swiping for anchors, &c. Halliwell quotes from Cole, “*Bawlin, big.*”

BED-FAST. Bed-ridden; a good word; probably not limited to sea-faring speakers.

BRUSTLE. A compound of *Bustle*, and *Rustle*, I suppose.

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“ Why, the old girl brustle along like a Hedge-sparrow! ”—said of a round-bowed vessel spuffling through the water.

I am told that, comparing little with great, the figure is not out of the way. Otherwise, what should these ignorant seamen know of Hedge-sparrows? Some of them do, however; fond of birds as of other pets—Children, cats, small dogs—anything in short considerably under the size of—a Bullock—and accustomed to birds-nesting over your cliff and about your lanes from childhood. A little while ago a party of Beachmen must needs have a day's frolic at the old sport; marched bodily into a neighbouring farmer's domain, ransacked the hedges, climbed the trees, coming down pretty figures, I was told (in plainer language) with guernsey and breeches torn fore and aft; the farmer after them in a tearing rage, calling for his gun—“ They were Pirates!—They were the Press-gang!” and the Boys in Blue going on with their game laughing. When they had got their fill of it, they adjourned to Oulton Boar for “ Half a Pint ”; by and by in came the raging farmer for a like purpose; at first growling aloof; then warming toward the good fellows, till—he joined their company, and—insisted on paying their shot!

BLOW OFF. To brag, boast. Also, as thus: “ Well, if they 'd call'd on me, I 'd a' blown off a song like the rest.”

BRÔT-TOW. (As I suppose, from the derivation suggested to me, viz., A. S. *gebrotu*, fragments; but sounded *Braw-toe*), scraps and fragments of rope collected to make coarse paper of.

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An old fellow—an old Waterloo fellow too—used to go by the name of “Old Brawtoe” among the beachmen, because of his dealing in this line.

BULL. “He know no more of Herrin’-drivin’ than a (2) Bull does of a Sunday.” And again, “He spuffed about till he ‘sweat like a Bull.’”

BUTTER A CAT’S PAWS. Not a phrase, but a fact; being a charm sometimes resorted to by the “ignorant” here—about to attach a cat to the house, for which, as they gravely say, “She ’s a bringing up.”

BUTTERFLY. Considered lucky, and therefore tenderly entreated, when straying into house, or net-chamber. I am told by a learned Professor that the same belief prevails in India.

CARDS. Though often carried on board to pass away the time at All-fours, Don, or Sir-wiser (*q. v.*), nevertheless regarded with some suspicion when business does not go right.

A friend of mine vowed that, if his ill-luck continued, over the cards should go; and over they went. Opinions differ as to swearing. One Captain strictly forbade it on board his Lugger: but he also, continuing to get no fish, called out “Swear away, lads, and see what that ’ll do!” Perhaps he only meant as *Ménage’s* French Bishop did; who, going one day to Court, his carriage stuck fast in a slough; the Coachman swore; the Bishop, putting his head out of the window, bid him not do that: the Coachman declared that unless he did, his horses would never get the carriage out of

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the mud. "Well, then," says the Bishop, "just for this once then."

CARAVAN-HAT. The old-fashioned Poke bonnet; or the present fashion "produced" by the modern "Ugly"; like the tilt of a covered cart.

COACH; COACHED. Out of pocket. "I 'm coach'd," or "I 'm Coach."

CHOPP'D HAY. Smuggled tobacco.

COMPANY-KEEPERS. Ships that sail together, as well as Lovers who "walk," together. "That old Jemima and Woilet (Violet) are rare company-keepers."

DEE. "Steady as a Dee"; *Die* is the thing meant, I suppose, because of its four-square solidity of figure. "The Old Girl"—Ship, of course—"fared right silly at first, but, when we got into deep water, went as steady as a Dee."

DOUBLE-TIDES. I know not if this name for *double-work* is peculiar to us; but I think it must belong to such estuary rivers as ours. However, our Suffolk Crabbe offers us a pleasant illustration in this picture of a thrifty, but unpenurious, couple in their little Farm.

"Few were their acres; but with these content
"They were each pay-day ready with their rent.
"And few their wishes; what their farm denied,
"The neighbouring Town at trifling cost supplied.
"If at the Draper's window Susan cast
"A longing look, as with her goods she pass'd,
"And with the produce of her wheel and churn

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“Bought her a Sunday robe¹ at her return,
“True to her maxim, she would take no rest
“Till care repaid that portion to her chest.
“Or if, when loitering at the Whitsun Fair,
“Her Robert spent some idle shillings there,
“Up at the Barn before the Break of Day
“He made his labour for the indulgence pay.
“Thus both, that Waste itself might work in vain,
“Wrought double-tides, and all was well again.”

EGG-BOUND. Probably an inland word; but it was only (s) from one of the beach I heard it. He had a pair of—what does the reader think?—Turtle-doves in his net-loft, looking down so drolly—the delicate creatures—from their wicker cage on the rough work below that I wondered what business they had there. But this truculent Salwager assured me seriously that he had “doated on them,” and promised me the first pair they should hatch. For a long while they had no family; so long “*neutral*” indeed as to cause grave doubts whether they were a pair at all. But at last one of them began to show signs of cradle-making, picking at some hay stuffed into the wicker-wires to encourage them; and I was told that she was manifestly “egg-bound.”

FAKE. A Take, or Catch. I suppose from Danish: as I find in my old Haldorsen *fæ* (Dan. *feck*), *impetrare*, *obtinere*.

¹ So, in another of Crabbe's Stories, a young Farmer makes love “in his Sunday robe”; which certainly is not Suffolk.

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FLIP, FLOP. The alternate flapping of the sails from side to side when the swell is more than the wind, or takes it out of the sail, and (as was said to me), "You don't move a Nutshell in an hour." More wearisome to the sailor than many a capful of wind.

FLURRIES. Sudden, and partial, commotions of the Sea, as over a shoal, but sometimes unaccountably in deep water. "I never knew the *Say* (sea) in such a takin'; all flurries like."

FOUL. Used in a fair sense: "When I get foul of those nets," &c.: take them in hand to repair, &c.

FORCE-PUT. Forced. "I did n't, till I was right force-put to it"; or "till I came to a force-put."

FRAPP. A crowd, crush. "There 's a pretty frapp of luggers down about the Humber, I warrant." (See p. 260.)

FROBN. Frozen. "I stood at the helm till my fingers were right down frobn."

FROTHY. Too light on the water (a vessel), as from insufficient ballast: such as I heard said, "Come a breeze, the old girl would blow away like a Thistle-blossom."

FRIDAY. By some a change of Weather—even from bad to better—is look'd for on a Friday. I have often laughed at this, and—found it right.

GAST-COPE. (I know not how else to write it, nor how at all to account for it), "Going gast-cope," without hire, or pay, as a boy on his first trial voyage.

GINGERBREAD-GILT. The gloss of Fancy, or Pretence.

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"He 's a fine fellow with his new business now: but, once come a kink in the rope, it 'll soon knock the Gilt off the Gingerbread." Gingerbread is also any ornamental carving or gilding about a ship's bows, &c.
"GOOD AS GOLD" is a good thing; but "Good as *old* Gold" is a better.

GOWRY. Greedy, voracious.

GRACE. "Laid up in Grace"; laid up "in lavender," away from common use.

HOME. "At home," in one's right wits.

HOT. "Tides run hot just now," *sc.*: when, "like a sluice," or "like a soldier's horse"—in the sailor's eyes, a doubly-portentous phenomenon.

HERRIN'-SPINK. (*I* thought "*Heron-spink*"), the Golden-crested Wren, often caught by the hand while "latching" in the rigging, or among the gear during (4) the North Sea Fishing.

These little birds, it seems, are then crossing the seas for the winter, and have been found, I am told, cluster'd almost like bees along the hedges near Caistor: so tired as to be taken by hand on shore, as by the sailors at sea. I find they call the bird "Woodcock Pilot" further north; being supposed to herald the Woodcock two days in advance.

HUES. "*Old Hues.*" The Tan water in which nets have already been soak'd, and preferr'd for a fresh infusion, as retaining somewhat of the former strength.

HALF-AND-HALF. The lugger started some 40 years ago on the principle of crew and owner sharing the profits.

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Here one is still talking of "*Luggers*," while they are all turn'd, or turning, into "Dandies"; that is, the great Lug-foresail becoming a fore-and-aft Mainsail. By this change the vessel loses something of her old character and grandeur; but she gains vastly in handiness, security, and (in the long-run) speed. For the old Lug, though a fine fellow, was a clumsy one; taking, at the best, some ten minutes to shift over, with all hands called up to the work, and, in anything of a gale, nearer half an hour; the "green hands," or countrymen, not so much hauling at the rope as hanging on, to keep themselves from going overboard. Fancy all this time and labour lost in turning, board after board, through your narrow seas, in pitch-dark tempestuous nights; the great ruthless screw-steamer holding on her noiseless way, and they unable to get out of it, lying like logs on the water. Whereas the Dandy Mainsail shifts over in half a minute, with two pair of hands. Why not then have thought of all this years and years ago? And now, for your Lowestoft men to be indebted to the example set them by their Yarmouth rivals! Foolish fellows!

IN-BRED. "He would n't take off a halfpenny (discount) to-day: but offered to take off Sixpence in the Pound next month, when the stuff 'll be eighteen pence dearer. That 's inbred work, *I* call it." (The reader may call it what he pleases.)

IVORY. "The wind sprung up, and the Sea begun to show his Ivory."

JOOP. (A form of "Whoop," I suppose.) "When those Penzance-men see us go out on a Sunday, Lord! how they would joop and hallor after us." [And well they might. You Lowestoft men who go down to the West

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for Mackerel should follow the honest custom of the country.]

KICKLIN'-STRING. On which a Warp of Herrings (apt to be as indefinite as "Half a pint of Beer") is carried, hung through the gills. The naval Dictt. give *Keckling-string*, old rope used for much the same purpose as *Services*.

KID.

This ancient A. S. word has been noted in my last year's letter; where, by the way, it should be added, that, whereas the Arm struck forward signifies 1000 Herring, it signifies 100 Mackerel; and the Arm struck up, and then "dung down," signifies *less* than 1000 Herring. The word also, as we saw, implies not only actual and present knowledge, as in this case, and as I have heard of the Trees "kidding the wind"; but (as in the case of the great clock) some mysterious presentiment of what is coming to pass. I am told that, as the *home* of the sea *kids* a coming wind, the stomachs of the sea-sick kid it before even the hoam does: another very unpleasant form of Home-sickness! Such sufferers by anticipation are called *weather-kidden*; mostly the "green" country hands who come up fresh from *terra firma*, to work the capstan on board.

KIDS. The compartments *on*—deck (not "*on—deck*," remember!) in which herrings are stowed.

LAIG. (So sounded, if not "*Lake*"), a chasm in the cliff at Hopton, running from that village to the sea. This must surely be Isl. Lag, | *locus depressus*. Voss, says (5) Richardson, gives *lake* as Latin *lacus*, connected with the Greek word for a rent, or fissure; not necessarily, though naturally, including water.

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LAST COME LAST. At last. "The old gentleman fared long upon the drope, and, last come last, give way altogether."

MANOR. I did not at first understand what was meant by a ship "wreckt upon the Manor." What did that mean? Why, stranded above the ebb, to which the Lord of the Manor's right extends. And if the vessel not only strike, but go to pieces there, he claims a fee from the owner. Think of that last drop in the cup! To be wreckt, half-drown'd oneself, and one's ship quite lost, and then to have to pay a fee for the privilege of her knocking to pieces where she lies! I was going to say one would forget one's own—but the pun is too bad even for Christmas.

MACARONI. A fore-and-aft Schooner, without square yards. [Eh! Mr. Editor? Et ego in Arcadiâ—In such a vessel do I sail withal.]

MOTHER. When a Lugger does so well that another is built out of her profits, she is said to be "Mother" of the new one. Thus, by pedigrees as quaint, if not so long, as those of Race-horses, the Linnet might be mother of the Leviathan; the Leviathan of the Little Polly; the Little Polly of the Zebedee; and Zebedee the mother of as many as you please.

MUTE. A vessel in size between the Coble and the Keel.

NAKED MAN OF COTHY. The BLUE ANCHOR Inn at Covehithe, still called after some former Sign of a Wild Man, or Black Boy, I suppose.

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NEW MOON. When first seen, be sure to turn your money over in your pocket by way of making it grow there; provided always that you see her face to face, not through a glass (window)—for, in that case, the Charm works the wrong way. “I see the little Dear this Evening, and give my money a twister; there was n’t much, but I roused her about.”—N. B. *Rouse* sounded as *house*.

[“*Her*” meaning the Money, not the Moon. Every one knows of what gender all that is amiable becomes in the Sailor’s eyes; his Ship, of course—the “Old Dear”—the “Old Girl”—the “Old Beauty,” &c. I don’t think the Sea is so familiarly address’d; *she* is almost too strong-minded, capricious, and terrible a Virago; and—he is wedded to her for better or worse. Yet I have heard the Weather (to whose instigation so much of that Sea’s ill humours are due) spoken of, by one coming up the hatchway, “Let’s see how *she* look now.” The Moon is, of course, a Woman too; and (as with the German, and, I believe, the ancient Oriental people), “the blessed Sun himself a fair hot Wench in a flame-colour’d taffata,” and so *she* rises, *she* sets, and *she* crosses the Line. So the Timepiece that measures the hours of day and night. A Friend’s Watch going wrong of late, I advised Regulating; but was gravely answer’d that “She was a foreigner, and he did not like meddling with her.” The same poor ignorant was looking with me one evening at your fine old church which sadly wanted regulating too: lying all along indeed like a huge stranded Ship, with one whole side battered open to the ribs, through which “the Sea-wind sang shrill, chill”; and he “did not like seeing her so distress’d”; remembering boyish days, and her good old Vicar (of course I mean the *former* one: pious, charitable, venerable, Fran-

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cis Cunningham) and looking to lie one day under her walls, among his own people—"if not," as he said, "*Somewhere else.*"¹

NEW YEAR. It is thought lucky, on first going out on
(6) New Year's day, to meet "a big man"; not big in paunch, but in height and breadth, and all the noble proportions "that may become a man." Lowestoft is a lucky place to live in for this; provided there be not many French Luggers in port, nor many of the young English "Quality" at the lodgings. But it is not the time of year for them.

NAILS. Some very tough old gentleman, or incorrigible Ironside of a Boy, may be called "Hard as Nails."

NOW AND AGAIN. Repeatedly.

OLD BONES. "That child 'll never make Old bones, I misdoubt," *sc.*, live to be old. And if he should, Mr. Editor? "Sixty years when they be gone will appear as short as one." The landsman likens our lives to the Grass and the Flower of the Field; and the seaman, not irreverently, and, as I am told by those who understand it, very expressively—

"Man that is born of a Woman

"Has a very little time to live:

"He comes up like a fore-topmast Staysail

"And down like a small flying Jib."

P. (Simply so sounded) of an Anchor; its barb, or fluke.

Qy. French *pied*?

¹ Some months after, seeing the Church with her southern side restored to the sun, the same speaker cried, "Well done, Old Girl! Up, and crow again!"

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PAPER-STUFF. "Why, her spars and *taikle* (tackle) was only so much paper-stuff; in a manner of speaking."

PEA-SOUP. "Regular as pea-soup"—a figure from the Navy, I suppose.

PENCIL-WORK. "His room is swept as clean as pencil-work."

PIN-PRINTS. Scraps of "Gays" stuck together for children to stick a pin into at random, and so to claim a prize for their own.

PINCH. When the falling tide has left its mark on sand or shingle, it is said to have *pinched*. A pretty word, Mr. Editor.

PUP. Any under-sized thing. I have heard of "Such a Pup of a House—of a Chapel—and even of a Church!" Any place in short may be called a Pup, where, as they say, "there aint room to swing a Cat round."

PROUD AS A HORSE. The Sailor generally regarding that creature as showing so much of the Devil, with all its rearings, prancings, and "Ha Ha's!" The Landsman may retort that the Sailor's *Rocking-horse* is quite as unruly a beast, plunging, snorting, foaming, and carrying itself and rider to the bottom.

PUFF THE GAFF. To blow a secret. "He thought to get off clear, but his mate puffed the gaff, and they were soon after him." This phrase calls for a nautical Philologist.

PUNT. The Lowestoft lug-sailed long-shore boat.

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RATTLIN' SAM. A term of endearment, I suppose, used by Salvagers for a nasty shoal off Corton coast.

RANGE. Swell of the sea; "There 's a terrible range into the harbour when the wind blow strong from the South."

RIDE TO WIND. When in the slack, or lack, of Tide, a vessel rides head to wind at her anchor. She is then "wind-rode."

RIPS AND TRUCKS. Odds and ends, fragments. Moor gives "*Truck*, rubbish; a field, or bank, foul from spear-grass, docks, &c., would be said to be 'full o' truck.'"

(7) **ROOMS.** The spaces between a boat's thwarts; thus divided, and named: 1, Fore-peak; 2, Fore-room; 3, Well; 4, After-room.

ROOMLY. Roomy; "a good roomly boat, she."

ROCKSTAFF. "So I 've heard say; but it may be only Old wives' Rock-staff," or "Rock-stuff?" Anyhow, such yarn as old wives spin.

ROVER. A *slink*, ill-conditioned codfish.

RUN IN. "Well, mate, how much do you run us in to-night?" &c., treat us to.

RED CAPS. Formerly, I am told, the Master-boat among the Luggers; she that had raised most money by the voyage, distinguished her crew with red caps, in token of victory.

RUTHER. Rudder; so *Lather* for ladder, &c. I remember (and always with awe) "Thou shalt do no Murther!" in our old village church. On the other hand, *thrash* hereabout becomes *trash*; "I 'll give you

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a good trashin "; *three* becomes *tree*; "one, tu, tree"; and when the wind blow you may hear it "*trummin troo* the riggin." This last comes nearer, I suppose, to the Teutonic *trommen*, *trommelen*, &c. Among these words do not let me forget Threshold, which hereabout becomes "*Troshel*"—"over the Troshel."

SAMSON-POST. The pedestal-post of the mast from deck to keelson. There 's a fine word, Mr. Editor, to begin letter S with.

SCARE. To "get the scare" seems to mean "*give* the scare." "He was best man at first, but t' other got the scare of him in the end."

SCRAM. Odds and ends, and leavings, of victuals.

SCUTCHEONS. Wooden baskets shaped somewhat between Butchers' trays, and Coal-scuttles, with handles a-top, to carry *fresh* herring. *Roarers* are for salt.

SERVICES. Pieces of old lint, rope, spun yarn (always sounded *spunnion*, you know) wrapt round rope or warp to prevent its chafing.

The word is not peculiar to these parts; but is noted here because among the Luggers, beer, biscuit, and cheese should, according to old usage, be handed round at this ceremony, which comes close on the voyage.

SHAKE CAP. Another form of "Pitch and Toss"—guessing how many Heads, and how many "Women" among so many Halfpence shaken together in a cap, and then turned down on floor or deck.

SKEET. (I suppose, *skate*), to skim on the surface.

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SHOTTENER. A shotten herring.

SHROOK. Those who are scared at "*shruk*" may prefer this milder Perfect of "*shriek*."

SMELL THE GROUND. A vessel, I am told, loses the control of her helm in proportion as she nears the ground; and so is said "to smell it."

SHIMMER. Not only, as before said, the glitter of fish coming out of the water *on-deck*, but of the *safer* of fish itself. "I should like to come in with a 7 last shimmer of fish": *sc. safer*. Which recalls to me that Mr. Nall's confident Etym., "*sea-fare*," which always seemed very doubtful, might possibly be changed to Isl. *sæfn*, *congeries*.

SLITE. Wear and tear. "That fore-sail have had a deal of *slite* this last winter." I suppose it is the same word as *slit* (as *wīnd*, *wīnd*) and perhaps nearer to Isl. *slita*, *atterere*.

(s) SMOLT. A calm. "It fell to a smolt toward evening."
(See p. 261.)

STOVE DOWN. "There was an old Gannet a watchin' us aloft; so I threw him a Mackerel; he turn'd his old eye upon it, and *stove down*, and clean'd him off in a wink." Qy. from what verb?

SPIT IN BOTH HANDS. For a good bargain.

SPRAT'S EYE. A sixpence; but this surely was between the days of the ancient and modern Groat.

SIR-WISER. *Sa'wiser*—(I can no nearer!)—a game of Cards which can only be play'd between an Adept and a Novice, and only once.

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The cards are dealt evenly between them, back upward; each alternately plays one; and whoever turns up a knave loses the stake agreed on. If the Novice do so, the course is clear; but if the Adept, by an under-squint at his own forthcoming Card, perceives a Knave, he ^{itches it inadvertently as it were,} ~~lays it~~ face-down, instead of up, on the table. The Novice, seeing this, says, "Come, Old Fellow, let 's see this like the rest"—and so himself turns up the fatal card. What can the name be? I was told, "Why, I suppose you become *wiser* Sir by the trick." If that were probable, one might almost conjecture "*s'aviser*," from the French, who are expert at such leger-de-main.

THOLE. As every reader knows, the peg between two of which the oar works. But I hope no reader will ever come to know what it is to "live upon a thole," as I have heard say of a half-starved dicky.
"in a manner of speaking."

THREE-STICKER. Salvagee for any three-masted ship; thrice blest, if she be, or promise to be, in trouble.

TOM TAILOR. By this name is the Mother-Carey's chicken known in these seas.

TRIM-TRAM. The Yarmouth fore-and-aft 'long-shore fishing boat.

TRUCK. Any sort of cap, or "*tile*" for the head.

"TURN LIKE A TOP." "Turn like a Fish"—said of any vessel that comes handily round, does not linger in stays, &c.

TWINE-MASKING. The cord by which the net is attached to the *Norsels*; the *norsels* being attached to the outer cord of all, called the *Net-rope*.

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WEEP. The nails weeping (with rust) is one sign of the ship's *complaining*.

WINGS. The separated sides of the Lugger's hold, in which the fish are stowed.

WIND-PROUD. A cloud big with wind.

WEASEL. A small buoy fastened at such a depth to a vessel's anchor as only to show above the low water of a spring tide. "So as, if you happen to break your anchor-*cheen* (chain) a-ridin', and you 've to nip off in a hurry, you know where to find your anchor again, ever so long after." [Salwager, with a wink.]

In addition to my own stock of Words and conjectures, I am allowed to quote some from the private letters of a far better Scholar, the present Librarian of Trinity College, Cambridge: a Suffolk man (indeed a near Neighbour of yours) as you know, Mr. Editor, and duly regardful of its ancient Dialect. The first two paragraphs refer to two of my Sea-words.

Your two words 'Frap' and 'Smolt' turn out upon examination to be really good Old English. For the former, Halliwell refers to Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseida*, iii, 410, where it is used in the sense of 'company':

"Cassandre, Helein, or any of the *frape*."

- (9) It occurs again in the *Lincoln Morte Arthure*, as printed by the Early English Text Society, l. 2091: 'Fyghttez with alle the *frappe* a furlange of waye.'

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'Smolt' is equally good. It occurs as an adjective in 'Sir Gawayne and The Green Knight,' and as a verb in the Alliterative Poems of the 14th century, published by the Early English Text Society. The Anglo-Saxon *smolt* is "serene, placid." Another form is *smylt*; and we find "*smylte ren*, gentle rain, *smylte weder*, fair weather." So there is no doubt that your friends at Lowestoft have preserved two exceedingly good old words.

Frackfull. I was very much pleased to find the other day that our Suffolk *frackfull* is the same as Chaucer's *fret full*; that is, freighted or fraught full. It occurs in the *Legend of Good Women*, 1115: "Ne jewell *fret full* of rich stones."

There is a passage in Chaucer which I have always thought a Suffolk man could understand better than any one else. It is in the *Knight's Tale*, l. 2462:

'The *groyning* and the pryve enpoysonyng'; where I cannot help thinking that '*groyning*' means the same as '*graining*, *strangling*.' The Dictionaries give it '*discontent*'; which I venture to think is weak, especially as we have '*murmuryng*' in the line before. '*Grain*' appears to mean 'the windpipe,' or rather 'the gullet.' I found in an old book the other day, Bright's *Treatise of Melancholy*;—"From the stomach it (*i. e.* rhewme) riseth by the *graine* of the throte."

"*Sammodithe*," noted by Sir Thomas Browne. It is only a corruption of "*So mot I the*," "*So may I thrive*," a frequent phrase in Chaucer. For example, it occurs in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, l. 6114, ed. T. Wright.

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“Sche knew myn herte, and my privete,
Bet than oure parisch Prest, *so mot I the.*”

[Nall says the word has been lately unriddled by Mr. Spurdens as a corruption of “Sam onto thee! the constant response to the toast ‘Here’s t’ ye!’” And I have been told that it is still the Bargeman’s, or Wherryman’s answer to “Good Day t’ ye!” on the Yare and Waveney. So Mr. Wright adds:]

I see on referring to Sir T. Browne’s Works (ut supra) that the same explanation is given of “Sam-modithe.” If it is used now in reply, it must have lost its original meaning, and must be supposed to signify “Same to thee!”

‘Hobble, or Hovel’ (which, hereabout means *Salwagin*). Halliwell gives “Hovellers (as Kentish) for people who go out in boats to land passengers from ships passing by.” And in the *Times* of January 12th, 1869, was a note from Yarmouth: “A few days since, the *Secret*, a boat usually called a *Hoveller*, left the harbour for the purpose of sweeping for anchors in the roadstead, and in the Wold.” Halliwell further explains *Hoblers* as sentinels who kept watch at beacons in the Isle of Wight. Now a ‘hobler’ was a light armed soldier, so called, says Blomefield, from his riding a ‘hobby’ instead of a charger. Such a one would naturally be employed as a scout; and watching the signals of beacons would
(10) fall to his share. Is it possible that the boats which watch the signals of vessels are therefore called Hobblers?

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I have got one step nearer to the solution of what Forby calls '*Four-releet*,' and '*Three releet*.' These are properly '*Four-way-leet*' and '*Three-way-leet*.' *Four-way-leet* becomes first *Four'yleet*, next *Fourreleet*; and then '*Three releet*' is formed by analogy. In a book which I am editing for the Roxburghe Club (an English 15th century prose translation of a French poem) the word '*Weylate*' occurs as the rendering of '*Quarrefour*.' In Harsnet's *Declaration of Popish Imposture* (1603), p. 134, I find "How were our children, old women, and maides afraid to crosse a Churchyard, or a *three-way-leet*, or to goe for spoones into the kitchin without a candle?" What '*leet*' is I am not yet sure.

Do you remember an old rhyme which I certainly have heard in Suffolk, about the Slow-worm and the Viper? It runs thus:

"If the Slow-worm could see and the Viper could hear,
Then England from Serpents would never be clear."

Or thus:

"If the Viper could hear and the Slow-worm could see,
Then England from Serpents would never be free."

I want to quote it and cannot be certain which is the proper form.

Bishop Barnabee. About the first part of the word I have no opinion to offer. It may be the result of alliteration. But I think that *Barnabee* is a corruption of '*burny-bee*,' as if either '*the burnished or shining-bee*,'

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or 'the burning or glowing bee,' from its gloss or colour. Halliwell gives the form 'Burnie-bee,' as used in Norfolk, and he has moreover 'Burn-cow,' which he defines as a species of beetle, but which I have no doubt is the lady-bird, another name for which is 'lady-cow,' so that 'burn-cow' is a combination of the two names. By the way, I think 'lady-bird' may be a corruption of 'lady-bud,' and this again of 'lady-bug,' and yet I see in some slips of Bedfordshire words collected by Mr. Burgon, of Oriel, which I have now before me, that in the neighbourhood of Nismes the children call it '*galinette* dou bon Diou.' 'Lady-bug' is the name in Kent and throughout New England. In Bedfordshire it is called 'Goolabee,' which looks like 'golden-bee.'

'*Mardle*' (meaning *Chatter, Gossip*) I cannot help thinking should be spelt without the 'r.' There is an Anglo-Saxon word *mædlan* or *mathelian*, which means 'to talk,' and looks like the parent of our word. [The word, however spelt, means street gossip. Crabbe describes that of Farm-house Wives, but such as every one who remembers the "*Society*" of Country Towns must recognise as reigning there also; not only among Wives but Spinsters also, all talking at once, and consequently at the top of their voices, and the prosperity of the "*Party*" measured by the amount of noise. Crabbe, probably, suffered enough from it in both cases.

"Theirs is that art which English wives alone

"Profess—a boast and privilege their own;

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“ An Art it is where each at once attends
“ To all, and claims attention from her friends,
“ When they engage the tongue, the eye, the ear,
“ Reply when listening, and when speaking hear:
“ The ready converse knows no dull delays,
“ But ‘ double are the pains, and double be the praise.’ ”]

APPENDIX.

(11)

I see that, in my last year's extracts from Wesley's Journal, I omitted to quote his *first* visit to Lowestoft.

On the 10th October, 1764, he was at Yarmouth; and on “ Thursday, 11th, I was desired to go to Lowestoft, in Suffolk, nine miles south-east of Yarmouth. The use of a large place had been offered, which would contain abundance of people; but, when I was come, Mr. Romaine had changed his mind; so I preached in the open air ”— [by the old brick wall in your garden, Mr. Editor]—“ a wilder congregation I have not seen; but the Bridle was in their teeth. All attended; and a considerable part seemed to understand something of what was spoken; nor did any behave uncivilly when I had done: and I believe a few did not lose their labour.”

And again, “ Tuesday, Feb. 24th, 1767, I was desired to ride over (from Yarmouth) to Lowestoft. The house would not contain one-fourth of the people, so that I was obliged to preach in the open air; and all behaved with great seriousness.”

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This Journal of Wesley's is a valuable as well as very interesting record of England during fifty years of last century. For Wesley was a very shrewd as well as very truthful observer of the many Men and Cities he visited. Anyhow, his account of Lowestoft a hundred years ago applies almost as well to its present condition as an account of it published this very year in a creditable Magazine—*All the Year Round*—one of the best, if not (as I think) the best of all such Serials, rarely without some one article more than worth the cost of the whole. The article I refer to is one of a series entitled "As the Crow flies," and written in that smart, and so-called "*graphic*" style which the genius of the writer who conducts the Paper has made so popular, but which is more suitable to Fiction than to Fact. Well; in the number for June 26th of this year, the Crow has flown to Lowestoft, and takes a Bird's-eye view of the Town, the Trade, the People, &c., as they *are*. Passing over a few picturesque inaccuracies, such as Nelson's Barsham being "close to Lowestoft" (it is ten miles off "as the Crow flies"); and the Waveney being "re-wedded to the Sea" (from which it was never divorced; now as always running into it along with the Yare at Gorleston) we will begin with the Beginning.

"According to Mr. Walcott, the name of the town in Domesday was Lothar-Wistoft" (*Lothu-wistoft*; but that may be Mr. Walcott's error)—"that is, the toft or cluster of houses by the Loth (low) river; and he supposes that Lothar and Irling, the Danes, after the conquest of Essex, in 1047, established a station here to

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receive Danish colonists. The old Danish fishing town, on which a modern watering-place has engrafted itself,¹ *stands on an eminence backed by hills* and with broad sands at its feet." (The "Old Town" stands on *the hills*, or hill, itself, "backed" by no other hill whatsoever)—"Below the houses on the brow of the ridge, hanging gardens slope to *the alluvial land lying between Lake Lothing and the sea.*"—(The hanging gardens below the houses on the ridge do *not* slope "to the alluvial land lying between Lake Lothing and the Sea," but to the sandy *denes* left by the receding of the sea.) "The beach along the shore is a *strip of shingle*, from which runs the *great shoal called the Pakefield Flats*, probably submerged land: but the sands of the denes, in front of Lowestoft, *are never overflowed.*" (The sands of the Denes in front of Lowestoft *are* sometimes considerably overflowed by the sea, as in last year's High Tides. No "*Pakefield Flats*" are marked in any chart; but—what the writer has omitted—the Holm Sand *is* marked; a far | more considerable protection to vessels riding in the (12) North Roads than either the Newcome or Corton Sands, which he distinguishes as such.)

And now, coming to the Town itself, as it *is*; "The

¹ *And, compared to the original Stock, with its warm red roofs running irregularly along the beach and up the hill, what an ugly Offshoot is this "Modern watering-place" of uniform drab-white and slate, looking rather like some Quaker settlement than a proper harbourage for gay summer Visitors. Let any one but a Quaker—or an Esquimaux—or an Englishman (who in general hates rich colours, and especially where they are most needed to warm and light up his cold, colourless, skies and seas) look from the sea, or from the end of your Pier at the contrast between Wesley's Old Town to the right, and the "modern Watering-place" on the other side of the Bridge.*

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town boasts some *twenty-five luggers and fifty half-and-half boats*”—(Enquiring at the Harbour Office, we find there are *Two hundred and fifty Herring Luggers*, of one sort or other)—so that when “it is calculated that the nets of the Lowestoft and Yarmouth fishermen, if placed in a straight line, *would reach two hundred miles*”—Why, as each Lugger’s nets average over a mile, those of the Lowestoft boats alone would more than cover the distance. “The town now boasts *one thousand six hundred houses, and a population of more than six thousand seven hundred and eighty-one persons.*” (In 1861 there were, including Kirkley, 10,066 inhabitants, and most probably by this time there are 18,000: though none are engaged in the “Danish Cattle trade,” to which we are told “the North Pier” is “chiefly devoted”; that trade having become quite extinct since 1858.)

In short, however correctly the Crow may descant upon other “locacities” (as a superfine Commercial Traveller called it), in this case he seems not himself to have visited Lowestoft at all, but to have flown backward to some foregone account, which he has not even correctly reported.

And now, Mr. Editor, will you, by way of winding up this rambling Christmas number, find room for some poor verses relating to the Sailor’s “Somewhere else,” [at p. 254] however irrelevant to the general purpose of your Magazine. They were found pencill’d (whether of his

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own making or not) in the Prayer-book of a poor lad who died of Consumption at sea on board of the Forfarshire. Poor verses indeed, whosoever they are; but I remember the Great Poet of our day—not Mr. Browning—pausing to murmur over that “single bursting bubble”; while the Great Novelist (say Moralist)—not Mr. Dickens—thought there must have been a hundred bubbles rather than one. The reader may choose; between a Calm, with the ship moving “a Nutshell in an hour”; or driving along through the foaming water in a breeze. I give the verses just as I copied them from the well-used Prayer-book:

“He sleeps; but oh! he sleeps not there hard by
“The hallow’d Building or the Village Fane
“Where oft’ in youth he knelt, and pray’d to lie,
“Far from the tumult of the restless main.
“The sullen waves close o’er him: but there’s not
“A stone to mark the burial of the Brave;
“A single bubble bursting marks the spot
“Where rests the Sailor in his Sailor’s grave.”

The Prayer-book enclosing these verses was sent home, together with other of the lad’s chattels, to his father by the Mate of the Ship, with the following letter:

“You wish to know your Son’s dying words and wishes, and I am certain he explained them himself to me more than any one on board of the ship. Poor man, he used to tell me many a time about his sister, and lament her loss to him, little knowing he was to die of the same, and he used often to say if he got safe home this time he

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would not go to sea again any more, but he would try some business ashore, and nearly his last words was to me that he had seen her come into his Cabin, and some more angels with her, and he called out aloud to me to come and see them, and he told me she had wings and they all fled up the skylight. So tried to persuade him he was dreaming, but no, he would not be put of his opinion. God bless him.

“MAGNUS HARPER.

“January 14, 1853.”

[This is all Magnus has time to say; but he means what he says. “God bless him!” A good fellow, I ’ll be bound, wherever he is—here, or “somewhere else”—“Sit anima mea cum”—Well, at any rate, I should like a pipe and a glass of grog with Magnus Harper.]

A CAPFULL OF SEA-SLANG FOR (1)
CHRISTMAS.

[*From the East Anglian of January, 1871.*]

ABROAD. Out to sea; the wind "getting abroad" of a night betokens bad weather coming. Whereas, the Sea-fowl winging that way of an evening promises well: they make Shore-ward when the wind gets out.

ALMANACKS. "We 'd nothing else to do, so we took to making of Almanacks," &c.: forecasting the weather.

ALL SAIL STANDING. All clothes on when "turning in" at night, so as to be ready for action when turning out in the morning.

ASLEEP. The sails are *asleep* when steadily filled with wind which there is not swell enough to roll out of them, and the vessel they waft spins along like a Top, which is also said to *sleep* at its fastest. And, as natural, this is more likely to happen when the sails are heavy with the moister air of night. Then it is the ship flies "like a Witch."

BARGAIN. A quantity. "There was a rare Bargain of Flies, Wasps, &c."

BARK-WEB. A knot running into a tree, and into the wood cut from it for ship's timber.

BOLD. A bold Boat; a bold Coast; rising high above

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water, with which the Seaman himself "*makes bold*" when coming close in shore.

BORE OF THE TIDE. The full strength of it, which is at its strongest about half-tide, among these narrow seas. "Right in the Bore of the Tide." This we know is the name of the tidal wave, elsewhere called *Ægir*, and, as with so many of our substantives, the simple perfect of the verb *Bear*.

BRISTOCK. The small Knee-timber within a boat's bows, to strengthen them.

BULLOCK'S JIMMY. Bullock's head, in much request on board ship to make "*Supe*" of.

CAST. A boat left broad-side on the beach, not hauled up "end on." "That yawl have been off—she 's cast, I see."

CANDLE OUT OF BINNACLE. "He soon ran the candle out o' the Binnacle"; *sc.*, all the money out of his poeket.

CLUNK. To whet a knife on brick or stone.

CRACKERY. Crockery, China-ware; a happy hit!

"CURLEW carries a shilling on his back"; *sc.*, can be sold for a "Bob."

DOLLAR. "Shine like a Dollar"; said by a Sailor of a Pony that he got up after her holiday in the marshes—duly holding a bit of bread to windward, he told me—and her coat was "as fine as a star," he said, "shine like a Dollar, that ta did."

DOG DASH. Sappy timber. "I told him he 'd put a little of Dog Dash into the Lugger's side."

DRABBLE-TAIL. Draggie-tail; a vessel so *lean* aft as to

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“slap her stern” into the seas; also called a “Slap-tailer.” Two Guernseys colloquing over a half-pint: A., “You know, Duffer” (B’s “*nom de mer*”), “that old Jemima of yours is a regular Drabble-tail.” B. (who has hitherto vindicated his ship as best of the bunch), “Hang her, she’s an old — witch. Let’s have another half-pint.”

EYE OF A BOAT. “The mast is too much in the eye of the boat,” meaning, stepped too forward in it.

ELSNORE CAP. Made of the northern black dog’s skin (2) and hair.

FEETS. Feet; the *s* intensive added to the end instead of the beginning, I suppose. “She was feets and feets under water by the time we got to her.” The Irish footman did not go so deep when he announced to the Drawing-room, “Mrs. Foote and the Miss Feet!”

GAFFERS. Smacksmen; so called by their rivals in the lugger.

GANGER. A leader; captain of a gang.

GAY-GOWN DAY. “What the likes of us sometimes say in fine weather at sea; thinkin’, I suppose, of the women ashore.”

GILDINGS. Mutilated fish; bitten by *Dogs*, &c.

GOG-ON. What we call “egg on.”

GUY. Trivet for the fire.

HEART OF THE WIND. The strength that promises endurance. A less determined wind has no “*Weight*” in it; no *Heart*; a very comfortable apathy, by the by, in a North-easter, unless to those who are running

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away from it. "A hard-hearted wind for ye, Master!" will be sung out by some one going before it as he passes some wind-bound captain looking disconsolately over his ship's quarter.

Before I leave the word, I will add a Suffolk superlative of which it is "the heart," almost as good as any of Major Moor's, quoted in a former number. It was said to me by one honest Guernsey of another to whom I owe the greater part of this Sea-slang, though he remains quite unconscious of the debt, even after reading his own words on a fragment of Proof inadvertently given him to light a pipe with—"HE'S THE BEST-HEARTEDEST FELLOW THAT EVER I KNEW."

HIT-WOOD. To run a Yawl's bows right upon the vessel she is come after, and, by so doing, anticipate the job of salvage from any other yawl that may be in the same chase. This is not done without risk in a heavy swell; the bow of the yawl sometimes getting smashed in the collision, so as she has to return home with what of bows she has left "cocked up" in the air, the crew being all got astern to keep them above water.

HOB-GOB. A nasty jumping sea.

HUFF-UP. The sea beginning to "*make*, and shew his Ivory."

HOMER. A larger *specie* of Picker, or Thornback, marked with black spots, and by some accounted better eating—as well it may.

HUDDENS. Those timbers along a vessel's sides that touch the stem at one end, and the stern-post at the other.

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JENNY-GROATS. Pearl-barley.

JILLY-BOWLS. "Great Jilly-bowls of Waves." Query?

JIBBET ABOUT. To waggle, as a loose topmast.

KICK. "All the kick," all the Go, the Fashion.

"KICK OFF THE NEST." To dislodge—oust. [In which latter word the *s* intensive has got itself into the middle of the word.]

LAND-FALL. The sight, or approach, of land.

LARGE. Going before the wind; with all sails filled, and "asleep." I also hear hereabout of "Large with child," reminding one of a certain quaint passage in Midsummer Night's Dream, and surely better than the three-letter'd syllable in common use. Neither, of course, is for tongues or ears polite.

LONG-LEGGED. Of a more than average draught of water for the vessel's|size. As for great ships, we know that, (*s*) as the fine old Proverb says, "Great Ships ask deep Waters."

LOWDIES, or LOWDERS. Woodlice that eat into ships' timbers: to be trapped, some think, in leaves of brake strew'd about, as flies in what they call flycatchers.

LUCKY BEE. A humble, or, as *we* say, Bumble-bee, got out to sea, quite from his latitude, and welcomed as a bringer of good luck if he alight on board. He is not always so tenderly used ashore, by the boys, at any rate, who, chasing him for his honey, as I was told, would pull him in two directly he was caught, "*lest he should eat up his own honey,*" if he got the chance.

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MARTEN-TAILED. What we Landsmen called "Swallow-tailed," when describing the absurd coat by which "the Quality" distinguish themselves.

MEWZY (so sounded). "The sky look mewzy to wind'-ard"; meaning thick and ill-promising.

MITTEN. "Dead as a Mitten"—that is the sea-phrase.

Another article, as well appreciated by the Seaman, is commonly used for the same comparison ashore. A Gamekeeper near Lowestoft was describing how some Dignitary of the Church—he knew not what—was shooting with his master. Some game—I know not what—was sprung; and the Gamekeeper, at a loss for any correct definition of his man, called out, "Blaze away, your Holiness!"—"And blowed if he did n't knock it over as dead as a Biscuit!"

MOON-RAKING. A vessel with so much *shere*, or Curve, as to be like Wordsworth's "Crescent Moon."

MUCKER. Anything worthless—"Only a Mucker!"

Less than a hundred years ago, "there would have been a time for such a word." We read (in Walpole, I think), of the beautiful Lady Coventry excusing herself for mopping her face (to which, being so painted, more excuse was due) by saying the heat was such that "she was all of a muckibus."

MILCH-ROE. The soft-roed Herring. Sometimes I am told a Herring is found with hard and soft roe both; and is called a "John and Joan."

NAGER (*a*, as in "*acre*"). I suppose *neger*, *nigger*. "Such a *nager* of a Boy!" I have heard "a Dutch

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nagre," as formerly a "Dutch Uncle." How came our peaceable neighbours to stand for Signs of terror as the old Turk did?

NET-EYES. The first 'long-shore Herring; why so called nobody knew.

ON END. Continuously. "I did n't sleep right *on end*, but by starts like."

POKER BEER. Beer heated with a red-hot poker; about a pint to a poker, I am told. There are worse things, and, as Lamb said, better.

POLTER (long *o*, as in Poker). To range along the beach in search of whatever the sea may wash up.

RAISY-FACE. A vessel with her stem, or any forward part of her, too high above water may be called "a proper raisy-face Lady."

RENEWED. When a whole new piece of *Lint* has been added to the old, nets are "renewed"; when the old Lint is simply repaired, they are "*Bet ups*." And good nets, well bet up, and well renew'd, will *kill* themselves catching fish, they say, before wearing out.

RIND. Skin and bone; "A mere rind of a woman." (4)

ROMAN-NOSED. A boat with a very curved stem. "A regular roman-nosed Lady, she."

SCALL-GAT (*a*, as in "shall"). A *score* through the cliff near Pakefield.

"SALT AS NEWGATE." What the Adjective has to do with the Substantive "I must leave," as we say in Suffolk.

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SHE-PIPE. A cracked pipe, that won't smoke where it ought.

SHIN-UP. To *swarm* up a mast; a feat in which the legs have as much to do as the arms.

SIDE-WIDE. Set aside.

SOLDIER. A red herring; or the remainder Tobacco in a pipe. "I say, just wait till I 've smoked this Soldier out."

STROOP. The wind pipe.

SUED (so sounded). A vessel touching the ground.

SPIN A COPPER. Tell a Yarn.

SUMPY. Water-soaked—water-logged.

STREAM-LEACH. Waifs and strays of weed, wood, and sometimes Bees and Flies, &c., cohering by I know not what attraction in a narrow line, sometimes three or four miles long, far out at sea; A. S. Lœcan, An. lœcan, *allicere*?

SOMETHING: A SOMETHING. "She lay and kicked about a *Something*, I can promise you."

SPRING A LUFF. As when the wind freshens or turns upon you.

"When there's a Lull

"Keep her full;

"When there's a Puff

"Spring a Luff."

SUN-DOG. A prismatic appearance about the sun, prophetic of foul weather. As a sailor said to me—"Lookin' right *fast* at you"—*fast*, not like the modern young lady, but "Like a Lion," he said.

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SWOFFY. Muddled with drink. I have heard "*swodgy*," which, I suppose, is connected with the more innocent liquor that makes a *swidge* of dry places inland. When a man recovers from *his* wet, he goes about "solid and sober" once more.

SCOLTER (*o* long). A larger and more whale-like Porpoise, more frequent in the North Sea, a great jumper out of the water, the young making a piteous infant cry when caught and brought *on* deck, while the mother swims about and about, looking for her lost one, and not to be comforted.

SWATTOCK. "She"—a skittish ship—"took me right off my legs, and brought me down a rare *swattock* on-deck."

Here intensive *s* is got to his old place again, if the name of a Game at Cards which Salvagers pass time away playing, while waiting for their prey, may be taken as the original word. At this game it is not the winner—but the loser—who gains, in the payment of as hard whacks as can be administered by a rope's end, or knotted handkerchief, which is called "The Money," kept under the Dealer's guernsey, and paid by the hands of all the players round into the successful candidate's hands. And the name of this pastime is "ABRAHAM WATTOCKS."

And with this your motley Correspondent makes his third, and probably last, bow to the grave audience of the *East Anglian*.—
E. F. G.

ADDITIONS TO FORBY'S VOCABULARY OF EAST ANGLIA.

WILL you allow me to add to Forby a few possible derivations from old Haldorsen's *Icelandic Dictionary*, which is nearly all the stock-in-trade I possess in that line.—E. F. G.

BUSK. Fowls lying in the sun and scratching up the dust into their feathers; *Buska, verrere*.

CADDOW. A jackdaw; *Kada, gallina*.

CAP. To challenge; *Kippi, certare*.

CESS. A layer, or stratum; *Sess, sedes, sella; Sessa, pulvinar*.

CLAMP. An extempore and imperfect sort of brick-kiln, &c.; *Klambra, quam rudissima construere*.

DROLL. To put off, amuse with excuses; *Drolli, hoerere, moras nectere*.

DUDDLE-UP. To cover with cloathes, *duds; Dudi, vestes plumatæ*. So our Suffolk word *Dum*, the down or flix of a Rabbit, is Isl. *Dun, pluma mollissima*.

FERT. To persuade; put off wares, says Ray; *Fifta, deludere*.

FLACK. To hang loose; a blow with some loose thing, &c.; *Flack, Flacka, &c.*

FLEERNECKING. Flaunting, ostentatious, &c.; *Flankari, venus Thraso*.

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- GALDER.** Coarse, vulgar, prate; *gala*, fatuari.
- GANDER.** To gad, ramble; *Gander*, serpens.
- GOLLS.** Fat chops; *Gull*, Bucca, *Os inflatum*.
- GAST, GHAST-COW, &c.** *Gas*, volva vaccarum.
- GIMBLE.** To grin, or smile; *Gimi*, dehiscere.
- GLY-HALTER.** A halter with winkers; *Glya*, offuscare oculos blanditiis.
- GROUT.** A thin mortar for filling up; *Grotti*, fex, sedimentum.
- GULSH.** Plump, souse; properly, into mud, &c.; *Gusa*, fuis præceps.
- HATTER.** To harrass, exhaust, &c.; *Hættr*, periculosus, præceps.
- HAWKEY OR HOCKEY.** *Hauga*, coacervare; or perhaps *Horgar*, aræ idolorum; from the ancient Pagan Festival whose Harvest Gods our Lord and Lady are supposed to represent.
- JAG.** An indefinite quantity of hay, under a *load*; *Jacka*, cumulare.
- JOSSING-BLOCK.** Jor, eques, en hest; jós, jó.
- KINK.** Entanglement, &c.; *Kengr*, curvatura; *Kickna*, recurvari.
- LAM.** To beat, &c.; *lam*, verberari.
- NATTLE.** To be bustling, stirring about trifles, &c.; *Natinn*, intentus, industrius.
- PULK.** A muddy hole, or pond; *Polkr*, lacuna, aqua reses.
- RAFFLING-POLE.** For stirring the ashes in ovens: *Hrafla*, manu verrere.

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- RALLY.** To sift; *Rella*, cretra actio.
- RANTER.** A can to carry beer from cellar to cup; *Renni*, fundere, *Hranni*, undas formare.
- SCOOT.** An irregular angle, &c.; *Skot*, latibulum, angulus tenebrosus.
- SEAL.** Time, season; Hay-seal, Barley-seal, &c.; A. S. *Sæl*, opportunitas. But "giving any one the Seal," or Sale of the Day surely means giving him *Good Day*; Isl. *Sæla*, beatitudo.
- SHAIL.** *Shail about*; to move loosely, &c.; *Skæli*, de-torquere.
- SLURRUP.** To swallow with noise, &c.; *Slupra*, mollia ingurgitare.
- SKINKER.** One who serves drink; *Skanker*, vinum poculo infundere.
- SPANK.** To move swiftly and stoutly; *Spinka*, cursitere.
- STAM.** To astonish, &c.; *Stam*, hæsitatio.
- SWALE.** A low place; shade; *Svali*, refrigeratio.
- SWARM.** To climb a tree with arms and legs; *Svarmla*, præcipitanter contrectare.
- TOD.** 28 Pounds of Wool; *Otot*, *Tot*, Lanificium rude.
- TUNDER.** Tinder; *Tundr*, fomes.
- WALTER.** To roll, as laid corn on the ground, &c.; *Valtr*, volubilis, caducus.

[From "*The East Anglian*," Vol. IV, p. 128.]

EAST ANGLIAN WORDS.

From "*Notes and Queries*," 26 January, 1861.

WILL any of your readers give me a probable derivation of "*Dutfin*," the bridle in cart-harness, as explained by Moor and Forby, but without any etym. by either. *Gast* or *Ghast-cow*, a cow not in calf when she should be, as also interpreted by them; Forby only proposing "A.-S. *Gast*," "*Spiritus*": and Moor quoting "*Gast-ware*," and "*Gast-beast and Heifer*," from two Suffolk inventories of the seventeenth century.

And, lastly, a word that Moor only notes, spells, and explains: "*Futnon*, now and then; 'every Futnon.' " Ray calls it a Sussex word, 'Fet'n anon.' It may be "derived from *future* and *anon*, after and soon; 'Every' " 'foot anon,' every now and then. Cullum's *Hawstead*." So far Moor. I never heard the word 'from the fountain,' but only as reported by a clergyman, whom a poor, sick woman had been telling of her "getting a little sleep every futinon." So he pronounced it.

Having asked for information about these words, will you *take* it about two others which have "suffered a sea-change" along these coasts, and are not recorded in our local Glossaries? (I think indeed most provincial glossarists have kept mainly *inland*, neglecting the sea-board, where some "ancient and fish-like" phraseology still subsists).

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Spoon-drift, spray. A sailor, telling me of the gale on last 8rd October, said that though it was a cloudless mid-day, the *spoon-drift* blew so thick over the vessel as to "cut the Sun right into little stars." I was wondering at the word (which I have since found is pretty generally used), till I remembered old Dryden's "barbarous" line (he owes much of his vigour to the vigorous slang he caught up):—

"When Virtue *spooms* before a prosperous gale,
"My heaving wishes help to fill the sail."

The word in this its first stage of alteration I find quoted in Richardson from Brooke and Beaumont and Fletcher. It then naturally got to *spoon* among the sailors I suppose; and Halliwell quotes from a Sea Dictionary of 1708,—“To *spoon*—or *spooning*—is putting “a ship right before the wind and the sea,” *without* any sail, it says, unless foresail, as being generally done in a storm, when Dryden's good wishes would scarce have helped the good ship Virtue.

Surely this “barbarous” *spoom* is a word we may be glad to recover under Dryden's sanction: how spoilt if properly spelt!

I cannot say so much for my second word, which, however, I consider the “prize enigma” of lucky discovery, and worth recording to show what changes a word may go through and come to. A young sailor was telling me how, one blowing night at sea, they had *Composites* on the mast-heads. I was beginning to wonder at “Price's

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Patent" in such a place at such a time, when an older hand corrected us. "Composants he mean, Sir"; the meteors that are well known to light on vessels at such seasons. But, then, why *composants*? I then remembered Dampier's telling of a "corpus sant" appearing on *his* masthead, "a Spanish or Portuguese corruption of *corpus sanctum*," he says, and considered by them, as also by those then with him, as a good sign (when seen aloft, at least), so much so that "I have been told that "when they see them they presently go to prayer, and "bless themselves for the happy sight." When seen on deck the Englishmen thought it a bad omen. "I have "heard some ignorant seamen discoursing how they have "seen them creep or (as they say) travel about in the "scuppers, telling many dismal stories that happen'd at "such times," &c.

Query, Why will no one reprint the whole, or a good abstract, of Dampier's fine *Voyages*?—and (now one is about it) all Dryden's Prefaces, which Johnson notices as things *sui generis* quite?

PARATHINA.

[FitzGerald signed himself "Parathina" and sometimes "Effigy."]

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